

THE MYSTERIOUS DOCUMENT

The Fitzroy Edition of
JULES VERNE

Edited by I O Evans



A FLOATING CITY
THE BEGUM'S FORTUNE
FIVE WEEKS IN A BALLOON
DROPPED FROM THE CLOUDS
THE SECRET OF THE ISLAND
MICHAEL STROGOFF
THE DEMON OF CAWNPORE
TIGERS AND TRAITORS
FROM THE EARTH TO THE
MOON
ROUND THE MOON
INTO THE NIGER BEND
THE CITY IN THE SAHARA
20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE
SEA
AT THE NORTH POLE
THE WILDERNESS OF ICE
THE MYSTERY OF ARTHUR
GORDON PYM
With Edgell All in Poe
JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE
OF THE EARTH
PROPELITRISI AND
FOR THE FLAG
BLACK DIAMONDS
THE MASTERSLESS MAN
THE UNWILLING DICTATOR
THE CLAIM ON FORTY MILE
CREEK
FLOOD AND FLAME
THE CLIPPER OF THE CLOUDS
MASTER OF THE WORLD
CARPATHIAN CASTLE
THE TRIBULATIONS OF A
CHINESE GENTLEMAN
BURBANK THE NORtherner
IXAR THE SOUTHERNER
THE SECRET OF THE HELM
STORITZ
LLADER OF THE RESISTANCE
INTO THE ABYSS
THE MYSTERIOUS DOCUMENT
AMONG THE CANNIBALS

JULES VERNE

THE MYSTERIOUS DOCUMENT

including also the first part of
ON THE TRACK

Part I of
CAPTAIN GRANT'S CHILDREN

Edited by

I. O. EVANS,
F.R.G.S.



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INTRODUCTION

IN THE eighteen-sixties Verne had a reputation to live up to: although so far he had produced only four of his 'Extraordinary Journeys', they had already brought him fame and fortune. *Five Weeks in a Balloon* had been followed by *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, that by *From the Earth to the Moon*, and that by *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*.* Naturally he wanted to continue the series with something no less effective.

His next book *Captain Grant's Children* (*Les Enfants du Capitaine Grant*) appeared in Britain as a trilogy. Its first volume, and the opening part of the second volume, are included here; the remainder of the second volume, as well as the third volume, which concludes the narrative, appear separately in this edition under the third volume's title *Among the Cannibals*.

Its sub-title, *Voyage autour du monde*, which became the English title under which the whole work was originally translated, *Voyage Around the World*, indicates the wideness of its scope, and the book was easily the longest which its author had so far produced. Its plot is moreover ingenious; Verne had gained from Edgar Allan Poe an interest in the deciphering of cryptograms, and this probably suggested the idea of the incomplete message, with its ambiguous significance.

Another of Verne's favourite authors was Sir Walter Scott, who had inspired him with enthusiasm for the chivalious traditions of Scotland, an enthusiasm which his own visit to the country had confirmed. Hence, perhaps, the benevolent Lord Glenarvan, with his yacht manned exclusively by members of his own clan; the tender-hearted Lady Glenarvan, the taciturn Major Mac-Nabbs; and the visionary Captain Grant, with his scheme for founding somewhere in the antipodes a Scottish colony independent of England—against whom, as Verne would have known from his historical reading, Scotland and France had often been united.

Rousseau's phantasy of the 'noble savage', uncorrupted by civilisation, may have suggested the Indian Thalcave, courageous, devoted, and generous. Delight in *Robinson Crusoe* and similar

*All these are included in the Fitzroy Edition of Jules Verne

works had given Verne his own phantasy, that of a refuge from civilisation on some delectable desert island, which figures so repeatedly in his work. Towards the end of the present narrative it appears for the first time.

He was fond of introducing into his stories an erudite character who provides the background of factual knowledge demanded by the narrative, and he liked also to liven this up with another character who affords comic relief. Here both are combined in the geographer Paganel, learned, intelligent, and resourceful, overflowing with information and always avid for knowledge, though at the same time he is absent-minded enough to be capable of the most elementary blunders.

Paganel admits that he did most of his geography from an arm-chair, and that was precisely what Verne did himself. Because of the death of another author, he had been asked to co-operate in producing an *Illustrated Geography of France*, and he complained that he had been working 'like a galley-slave' to complete this onerous and not over-inviting task.

The effort had left him worn out, and his fatigue may account for the lack of excitement in the present work—towards its end, moreover, his mind was playing with the idea of a much more fascinating theme, to be embodied later as *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.*

The present story is indeed as pedestrian as the activities of its heroes,† and, as Verne's biographer Kenneth Allott says, it lacks the unity even of a picaresque novel. Its chief interest for the contemporary reader lay in the descriptions of regions which, though now they have been developed and industrialised in a way that would have staggered the imagination of Verne himself, were when the book first appeared almost completely uncivilised and so imperfectly explored as to be almost completely unknown.

I. O. E.

*Included in the Fitzroy Edition in an abridged form.

†It however formed the basis of an exciting film, *In Search of the Castaways*.

THE MYSTERIOUS DOCUMENT

CHAPTER I

THE BALANCE FISH

ON 26TH July, 1864, a luxury yacht was steaming along the North Channel before a north east wind. The British Flag was floating from her gaff: from her mainmast flew a blue pendant, with the initials 'E.G.' embroidered in gold, and surmounted by an earl's coronet. She was called the *Duncan*; she belonged to Lord Glenarvan, one of the sixteen Scottish peers who sit in the House of Lords, and a distinguished member of the Royal Thames Yacht Club.

Lord Edward Glenarvan was on board with his young wife, Lady Helena, and his cousin Major MacNabbs.

The *Duncan* had only just been built, and was making a trial trip beyond the Firth of Clyde; and as she was heading for Glasgow and the Isle of Arran was coming into sight on the horizon, the sailor on the look-out pointed to an enormous fish in the yacht's wake. The captain, John Mangles, told Lord Edward, who went on the poop with Major MacNabbs, and asked the captain what he thought the animal was.

'I think it's a very fine shark.'

'A shark here!' cried Glenarvan.

'There's no doubt about it,' said the captain; 'the "balance fish" as that animal is called, is found at every latitude. If your lordship agrees we can show Lady Glenarvan an unusual catch.'

'What do you think, MacNabbs?' Lord Glenarvan asked the major, 'shall we try to catch it?'

'If you like' the major answered quietly.

'They're noxious creatures, and they ought to be exterminated, your lordship.'

'Then exterminate that one, Mangles.'

Lord Glenarvan asked Lady Helena to join him on the poop, to witness the operation. The sea was calm enough to show all the evolutions of the shark, as it plunged and swam about with vigour. The captain gave his orders, and the sailors threw over the starboard bulwarks a strong cord, bearing a hook baited with a thick piece of bacon. Although the shark was still fifty yards off,

it could smell the bait, and it rapidly approached the yacht. Its fins—black with grey tips—beat the water violently, while its tail kept it on a perfectly straight course.

As it advanced, its large prominent eyes seemed to be inflamed by greed, and its yawning jaws showed a quadruple row of teeth. Its head was wide, and looked like that of a hammer with its handle: the captain had not been mistaken in assigning it to the most voracious family of dog-fish. It was soon within reach of the bait, and, turning on its back to seize this more easily, it gulped it down; then the sailors hauled it in. The fish struggled violently as it was lifted out of its natural element, and they had to throw a cord with a running knot round its tail to restrain its movements. A few minutes later and it was on the deck. Then one of the sailors approached cautiously and cut off its tail at one blow.

As the greed of these animals is well known it is the sailors' custom, when they get hold of one, to cut it open to see what it has swallowed. Lady Glenarvan hurried away to her cabin whilst the shark, which was still breathing, was cut up. It was ten feet long, and weighed more than 600 lbs. The bait had reached the stomach, which was otherwise quite empty; the animal had evidently been fasting a long time, and the disappointed sailors were going to throw its remains into the sea when the boatswain noticed some object solidly fixed to the stomach-wall.

'What's that?' he cried.

'Well, it's a piece of rock the beast has swallowed for want of something better,' one of the sailors told him.

'Why, you fools,' exclaimed Tom Austin, the first mate, 'don't you see he's such a drunkard that he's swallowed bottle and all?'

'What!' Lord Glenarvan exclaimed 'the shark's got a bottle in its stomach?'

'Yes,' the boatswain replied. 'But you can see it didn't come from the cellar.'

'Well, Tom,' Lord Edward told him, 'take it out carefully; bottles found in the sea often contain valuable papers.'

Tom obeyed, and had the bottle washed, then it was placed on the cabin table, and Lord Glenarvan, Major MacNabbs, the captain, and Lady Glenarvan, who was as curious as the rest of her sex, came to look at it. His Lordship took it up carefully, and examined it with the attention a coroner bestows upon a serious case; and he was right to do so, for the most apparently insignificant indication may often lead to important discoveries.

'It is a Cliquot champagne bottle,' the major commented quietly.

'It doesn't much matter what the bottle is, if we don't know where it comes from,' Helena pointed out.

'It must have come a good distance, judging by the petrified matter which encrusts it,' said Lord Glenarvan. 'It had been a good while in the ocean before that shark swallowed it.'

He began to chip off the incrustation, and the cork soon appeared, rather damaged by the sea-water.

'That's a pity,' he said, 'for if there's any paper inside, it will be spoiled.'

'It's to be feared so,' replied the major.

'But it's a good thing the shark swallowed it or it would have sunk before long,' added Glenarvan.

As he carefully drew out the cork, a strong briny odour filled the cabin.

'Well?' asked Lady Helena, with feminine impatience.

'I wasn't mistaken!' said Glenarvan. 'There are papers in it, but they seem quite eaten away by damp, and they are sticking to the sides of the bottle.'

'Break the bottle,' MacNabbs suggested.

'I'd rather keep it intact,' replied Glenarvan.

'So would I,' suggested the major.

'Of course,' said Lady Glenarvan; 'but the contents are more precious than the bottle.'

'Break off the neck, your lordship,' said the captain; 'then you can take out the papers quite easily.'

Lord Glenarvan had to take a hammer to break the stony envelope, and the bits were scattered over the table. Several pieces of paper could then be seen sticking together. Glenarvan took them carefully out of the bottle, separated them, and spread them out before him whilst Lady Glenarvan, the major, and the captain, crowded round.

CHAPTER II

THE THREE DOCUMENTS

THESE PIECES of paper, nearly destroyed by the sea water, had evidently been written upon, but the lines were half effaced. For several minutes Lord Glenarvan examined them attentively, turned them in every direction, held them up to the light, and studied the least traces of any writing which the sea had respected.

Then he decided: 'There are three distinct documents, and they are copies of the same original, translated into three languages—English, French, and German.'

'Can you make any sense of them?' asked Lady Glenarvan.

'I'm trying to do so, but the words are incomplete.'

'Perhaps you can do it by comparing them,' the major suggested.

'Yes, we'll try that. Here's the English paper.'

It ran:

	62	Bri	gow
sink			
	aland		
skipp	Gr		
	this docum		of long
and			ssistance
	lost		

'There's nothing to be made out of that,' said the major, with a disappointed air.

'Whatever it is,' answered the captain, 'it's good English.'

'There's no doubt about that,' said Lord Glenarvan; 'the words "sink, a land, that, and, lost" are intact; "skipp" is evidently part of the word "skipper," and "Gr" is evidently the beginning of a name—perhaps that of the captain of some shipwrecked vessel.'

'It's quite clear what "docum" and "ssistance" mean,' added the captain.

'Unfortunately there are whole lines wanting,' answered the major. 'There's neither the name of the lost ship nor the place of shipwreck.'

The second piece of paper, more damaged than the preceding, ran as follows:—

7 Juni

Glas
zwei atrosen
graus
bringt ihnen

'This is written in German,' the captain said, as he looked at the paper.

'Do you know German, Mangles?' Lord Glenarvan asked him.

'Yes, your lordship.'

'Well, tell us what these words mean.'

'It's clear that *seven Juni* means "June seventh," and by adding this date to that in the English document, we have the complete date: June seventh, eighteen sixtytwo.'

'That must be it,' Helena cried, 'go on, captain.'

'On the same line,' the young captain continued. 'I find the syllable 'Glas', which, added to the "gow" in the first document, gives "Glasgow." It's evidently about some Glasgow ship.'

'That's my opinion,' the major agreed.

'The second line is entirely wanting,' the captain continued; 'but on the third I see two important words—*zwei*, which means "two" and *atrosen* or *matrosen*, which means "sailors" in German. The next word, *graus*, embarrasses me. I don't know how to translate it. Perhaps the third document will explain that. The other two words are easy enough. *Bringt ihnen* means "bring them," and, added to the English word "assistance" or "ssistance" in the other document, makes the sentence "bring them assistance".'

'Now we must try to find where they want the assistance taken to,' said Glenarvan. 'The next paper is in French, and as we all know that language it will be easier to make it out.'

Here is a facsimile of the third document:—

Troi

âts

tannia

gonie

austral

contin

pr

abor

jeté

cruel indi

et 37° 11

lat

ongit

'There are some figures, look!' said Lady Helena.

'Let's begin at the beginning,' Lord Glenarvan suggested.

'*Trois* and *âts* mean "trois mats," a three-masted vessel, and by comparing the English and French documents we know its name, the "*Britannia*." "Austral," of course, means the same in English.'

'That's a precious detail,' the captain said. 'The shipwreck took place in the austral hemisphere.'

'The next word *abor*,' continued Lord Glenarvan, 'is evidently the root of the verb *aborder*--to land. The poor fellows have landed somewhere. But where? *Contin* must be continent.'

'The next word "cruel"' said the captain, 'explains the German *graus*--*grausam*, cruel.'

Lord Glenarvan's interest increased. He continued: 'India--can be India? What does *ongit* mean? Oh, "longitude," evidently. And here is the latitude, thirty seven degrees eleven minutes. At last we have a precise indication.'

'But it doesn't say the longitude,' said MacNabbs.

'We must now translate the different documents into one language,' said Lord Glenarvan. 'We will write it in English.' He wrote the following, and showed it to his friends:—

June 7th 1862	frigate <i>Britannia</i>	Glasgow
went down	gone	austral
	by land	two sailors
Captain Gr.		land
contin.	pr.	indi
thrown this paper		in longitude
and latitude 37° 11'	Take them help	
lost		

At that moment a sailor came to tell the captain that they were entering the Firth of Clyde, and asked for orders.

'What are your lordship's intentions?' the captain enquired.

'I want to get to Dumbarton as quickly as possible. Lady Helena will return to Malcolm Castle, and I shall go up to London and lay this document before the Admiralty.'

Mangles gave his orders accordingly, and Glenarvan, again taking up the document, said: 'All we can be certain of is, that on the seventh June, eighteen sixty-two, a frigate, the *Britannia*, from Glasgow, went down, and that the captain and two sailors threw this document into the sea in latitude thirty-seven eleven, and that they are asking for help.'

'All the rest may be guess-work,' Lady Helena pointed out.

'Yes,' her husband continued, 'we must guess that the ship

wreck took place in the Southern Seas; but what about the word *gonie*? Don't you think it may be part of the name of the country?'

'Isn't it *Patagonie* in French, or Patagonia in English?' asked Lady Glenarvan.

'Is Patagonia crossed by the thirty-seventh parallel?' asked the major.

'That's easy to see,' Mangles unfolded a map of South America. 'Yes, Patagonia is crossed by the thirty-seventh parallel.'

'Let's take that for granted. We have settled that they "landed" on a "continent". Next we have "pr", which may be part of the word "prisoners". They have been taken prisoners, and, perhaps, the next words, "cruel indi," tell us that it is by "cruel Indians". Do you think I'm right?'

'That must be it,' the major agreed.

'I shall have to make inquiries at Glasgow as to the *Britannia*'s destination' continued Lord Glenarvan.

'We need not go so far for that,' answered the captain. 'I've got a file of the *Mercantile and Shipping Gazette* here, and that will tell us.'

The captain produced a bundle of newspapers of the year 1862, and began to turn them rapidly over. His search did not take him long, and he soon said, with an accent of satisfaction: 'May thirtieth, eighteen sixtytwo, Peru, Callao, the *Britannia*, under Captain Grant, bound for Glasgow.'

'Grant!' cried Lord Glenarvan. 'Can that be the man who wanted to found a new Scotland in the Pacific?'

'Yes,' answered the captain; 'he embarked in eighteen sixty-one at Glasgow in the *Britannia*, and has never been heard of since.'

'Then there's no longer any doubt!' said Glenarvan. 'The *Britannia* left Callao on May thirteenth, and on June seventh, a week after, she was lost on the coast of Patagonia. Now all we want to know is the longitude.'

'We don't want it,' answered Mangles; 'as the country is known, I'd undertake to go direct to the scene of the shipwreck.'

'Now I can write out of the whole of the document,' said Lord Glenarvan, and he proceeded to do so, underlining the words of which they were certain.

'On June 7th, 1862, the frigate *Britannia*, of Glasgow, went down on the coast of Patagonia in the austral hemisphere. Going ashore

two sailors and Captain Grant will try to land on the continent, where they will be prisoners of cruel Indians. They have thrown this paper in longitude and latitude 37° 11'. Take them help where they are lost.'

'That must be right, Edward,' Lady Helena applauded, 'and if the unlucky men ever see their country again, they'll owe it to you.'

'They must see it again,' Glenarvan answered. 'This document is too explicit and clear to allow the Government to neglect sending help to its three unfortunate subjects abandoned on a desert coast. What it did for Franklin, and so many more, it will do for them.'

'Perhaps the poor fellows have families, who are weeping for their loss,' said Lady Glenarvan. 'Captain Grant may have a wife and children—'

'You're right, dear and I'll undertake to inform them that all hope isn't over. Now, my friends, let's go up on deck, for we must be nearly in port.'

The Lady Glenarvan's carriage was waiting to take her to Malcolm Castle with Major MacNabbs. Then Lord Glenarvan took leave of his young wife, and caught the express at the station. But first he telegraphed the following message to the *Times* and the *Morning Chronicle*.

'For information respecting the fate of the frigate *Britannia* of Glasgow, under Captain Grant, apply to Lord Glenarvan, Malcolm Castle, Luss, Dumbarton, Scotland.*'

*At this point the reader may like to decide whether he agrees with this interpretation of the message—or, if it proves to be incorrect, what else could he suggest.—I O E

CHAPTER III

MALCOLM CASTLE

MALCOLM CASTLE stands in one of the most romantic situations in the Highlands, near Luss. It had belonged to the Glenarvans from time immemorial; they had kept up the hospitable customs of Walter Scott's heroes, Rob Roy and Fergus MacGregor. When the great social revolution took place in Scotland, a great number of vassals, who could not pay their rents to the old clan-chiefs, had been turned out. Some died of hunger; others became fishermen; others emigrated. The Glenarvans alone remained faithful to their retainers. Not one left his natal roof; they stayed in the clan of their ancient chief. The Glenarvan family were surrounded by Scotsmen, both in Malcolm Castle and on the *Duncan*; they were all children of Stirling and Dumbarton, brave fellows, devoted body and soul to their master. Some of them still spoke Gaelic.

Lord Glenarvan possessed an immense fortune; he employed it in doing good. He was a member of the House of Lords, but his politics were too thoroughly Scottish to be much appreciated in Parliament. Yet he was not illiberal nor narrow-minded; he believed in progress, for Scotsmen especially, and it was for the glory of Scotland that he competed in the races of the Royal Thames Yacht Club. He was thirty-two years old, with regular features and kind eyes. He was brave to excess, enterprising, chivalrous, a nineteenth century Fergus, goodness itself, better even than Saint Martin, for he would have given his whole mantle to the Highland poor.

Lord Glenarvan had been married scarcely three months; he had wedded Miss Helena Tuffnel, daughter of the great traveller William Tuffnel, one of the numerous victims to geographical science and the passion for discovery. Miss Helena did not belong to a noble family, but she was a Scotswoman, and that was nobility in the eyes of Lord Glenarvan: she was charming, courageous, and clever, and the Laird of Luss chose her for his life companion. When he met her she was an orphan, almost fortuneless, living alone in her father's house at Kilpatrick: he fell in love with and married her. She was then twenty-two, a

blonde, with eyes as blue as the Scottish lakes on a spring morning. Her affection for her husband was even greater than her gratitude: she loved him as if she were the rich heiress, and he the poor orphan. As to the tenants and servants, they were ready to give their life for the 'good lady of Luss.'

They had passed their honeymoon in their own castle, in the midst of the magnificent Highland scenery, amongst the glens and the heath, with the lake for a mirror of their happiness. After the first few months, Lord Glenarvan remembered that his wife was the daughter of a great traveller, and had her father's tastes and aspirations. He then had the *Duncan* built, meaning to take his wife to the Mediterranean amongst the islands of the Greek Archipelago. Lady Glenarvan's joy, when her husband put the *Duncan* at her disposal, may be imagined.

It was then that the scene we related in the first two chapters took place. His absence made Lady Glenarvan impatient rather than sad; she received a telegram the day after his departure, announcing his speedy return, a letter the same evening said he might be away some time, as his efforts had met with some difficulty; the next day came another letter, expressing his dissatisfaction with the Admiralty. Then Lady Helena at last began to feel uneasy.

In the evening, she was alone in the library when the steward came to announce that a girl and a boy desired to speak with Lord Glenarvan.

'Are they people from this neighbourhood?' asked Lady Helena.

'No, my lady,' answered the steward, 'I don't know them. They came by railway to Balloch, and they've walked on from there.'

'Show them in, Halbert,' Lady Glenarvan told him.

A few moments afterwards a young girl and a small boy entered the room. They were brother and sister, and very much alike. The girl was about sixteen. Her attractive face, her eyes, which looked as though she had been crying, her resigned but courageous face, her poor but neat dress, all spoke in her favour. With her was a boy of twelve, who already appeared to be taking his sister under his protection. The girl seemed a little intimidated by Lady Helena, who hastened to reassure her.

'Do you want to speak to me?' she asked, with an encouraging look.



'No,' the boy answered in a determined tone, 'not to you, but to Lord Glenarvan himself.'

'Please excuse him,' the girl glanced at her brother.

'Lord Glenarvan isn't at the castle,' said Lady Helena; 'but I'm his wife, and if I will do instead—'

'Are you Lady Glenarvan?' asked the girl. 'The wife of the Lord Glenarvan who sent the notice about the *Britannia* to the *Times*?'

'Yes, dear; and who are you?'

'I'm Captain Grant's daughter Mary, and this is my brother Robert.'

'Are you Miss Grant?' cried Lady Helena, taking the girl's hands.

'What do you know about my father's shipwreck? Is he still alive? Shall we ever see him again?' cried the poor girl.

'My dear child, there's hope, though it's but feeble, that you may see your father again some day.'

Mary Grant could hardly bear the change from despair to hope; she buried her face in her hands to conceal her tears. When the first shock was over, Lady Glenarvan told her about the document, and how it explained that the *Britannia* had been wrecked on the coast of Patagonia, the captain and two of the sailors having escaped, and how they had asked for help in three different languages.

While she was speaking, Robert Grant kept his eyes fixed upon her; his childish imagination was calling up the terrible scenes his father must have gone through; he could see him on the deck of the *Britannia*, in the waves, on the rocks, lying on the sand.

'Oh! our poor father!' he cried, clinging to his sister.

As to Mary, she listened with clasped hands, and did not utter a word till the explanation was over. Then she asked, 'Oh, Lady Glenarvan, may I see the papers?'

'Lord Glenarvan has taken them to London to use on your father's behalf; but I've told you all they contained, word for word, as well as the interpretation we gave them. The details of the document are now as well known to you as they are to me, Miss Grant.'

'I should have liked to see my father's writing,' sighed the girl.

'Well, perhaps Lord Glenarvan will be back tomorrow. He's taken the document to lay it before the Admiralty Commissioners

to try to make them send a ship in search of your father at once.'

'How much you have done for us, Lady Glenarvan!' cried the young girl. 'How can we show our gratitude?'

'We don't deserve your gratitude yet, dear; any one else would have done the same. You must stay at the castle till Lord Glenarvan comes back.'

'But we are strangers to you Lady Glenarvan.'

'No, dear child; Captain Grant's children are not strangers here, and I want you to hear from Lord Glenarvan what's going to be done to save your father.'

Lady Helena's kind offer could not be refused, and it was agreed that Mary Grant and her brother should stay at Malcolm Castle till Lord Glenarvan's return.

CHAPTER IV

LADY GLENARVAN'S OFFER

DURING THIS conversation, Lady Glenarvan had not mentioned the fears her husband had expressed about the way his request had been received by the Admiralty, nor the probability that Captain Grant was a prisoner amongst the South American Indians. She thought it better not to quench the hope she had kindled; and after having answered all Mary Grant's questions, she asked her about her own life, her position in the world, where she seemed to be her brother's only protectress. It was a simple and touching story, and it added to Lady Glenarvan's sympathy for her. *

Mary and Robert were the captain's only children. Harry Grant had lost his wife at Robert's birth, and during his long voyages he had left his children in the care of a lady cousin and a servant. Captain Grant was a bold sailor, who knew his trade well, a good navigator, and a good trader too, qualities most precious to the skippers of the merchant service. He had lived in Dundee, where his father, a minister of St. Katherine's Church, had given him a complete education, thinking that this was always useful, even to the captain of a merchantman. During his first voyages, first as mate and afterwards as skipper, his business had prospered, and some years after the birth of his son he had found himself in possession of a small fortune.

It was then that a great idea entered his mind, and made his name a household word. Like the Glenarvans and some influential families of the lowlands, he had few English sympathies. The interests of his country were dear to him, and to help it personally he decided to found a vast Scots colony in the Pacific Islands. Perhaps he dreamed of a Scottish America, independent of England, and he may have allowed his hopes to be too plainly seen. At any rate the Government refused to help him, and even raised difficulties which would have silenced anybody else.

But Grant appealed to the patriotism of his countrymen, put his fortune at the service of his cause, built a ship, and, with a picked crew, after having entrusted his children to his elderly cousin's care, he set out to explore the Pacific Islands. This was

in 1861. Letters came from him until May, 1862, but since his departure from Callao the *Britannia* had not been heard of, and the *Maritime Gazette* no longer mentioned him. It was then that the elderly cousin had died, and left the two children alone in the world.

Mary Grant was then fourteen; her valiant nature did not fail, and she devoted herself entirely to her brother. By dint of economy, prudence, and wisdom, working day and night, giving up everything to him, denying everything to herself, she educated and became a real mother to him. The children were still living at Dundee in poverty, nobly accepted, but valiantly fought against. Mary thought only of her brother, and hoped for some happy future for him. As she had believed that the *Britannia* was lost for ever, and her father dead, her emotion, when she read the paragraph in the *Times*, may well be imagined. She decided to go that very day to Malcolm Castle and to learn the best or the worst; anything was better than suspense.

Such was the painful story which she related to Lady Glenarvan, as simply as possible; clearly she did not realise how heroic her own conduct had been. But Lady Helena realised this, and she kissed the girl with tears in her eyes. Robert, who seemed to be hearing the story for the first time, at last understood all his sister had done for him, and all she had suffered, and he threw his arms around her and cried.

Night had closed in during their long discussion. Lady Glenarvan thought how tired the children must be, and she ended the conversation. Mary and Robert Grant were given a meal and shown to their rooms, where they slept to dream of a brighter future. Then Helena sent for the major, and told him what had happened that evening.

'That Mary Grant is a brave girl,' commented MacNabbs.

'May Heaven grant that Glenarvan succeed in his enterprise,' Lady Helena answered, 'otherwise the position of the two children would become frightful.'

'He will succeed,' replied MacNabbs, 'or the Lords of the Admiralty must have hearts harder than Portland stone.'

Notwithstanding the major's assurance, Lady Glenarvan passed an anxious night, and she did not get a minute's rest.

The next morning Mary Grant and her brother were in the large courtyard when a carriage could be heard approaching. Lord Glenarvan was returning to the castle as quickly as his horses could carry him, and at once Lady Glenarvan, accom-

panied by the major, went into the courtyard to meet him. He seemed sad, disappointed, furious, but he said nothing until he had kissed his wife.

'What news, Edward?' Lady Helena asked him.

'Those people are heartless!' her husband exclaimed

'Have they refused?'

'Yes; they have refused me a ship! They spoke of the millions spent in vain in the search for Franklin, they declared that the document was vague and unintelligible; they pointed out that the shipwreck had happened two years ago, and said that there was little chance now of finding the poor fellows. They declared that they could not search all Patagonia to find three men, and—and Scotsmen!—that the search would be in vain, and would make more victims instead of saving them. In short, they made all sorts of excuses, and they won't do anything for poor Grant!'

'Father! my poor father!' Mary Grant fell on her knees before Lord Glenarvan.

'Your father!' he was amazed.

'Yes, Edward,' Lady Helena exclaimed, 'these are Captain Grant's two children.'

'Ah, young lady.' Lord Glenarvan raised Mary to her feet, 'if I had known you were here—'

He did not say more. A painful silence, broken only by sobs, reigned in the courtyard. No one spoke, neither Lord Glenarvan, Lady Glenarvan, the major, nor the servants of the castle, who were crowding round their master; all these Scotsmen were silently protesting against the conduct of the English Government. After some moments, the major asked Lord Glenarvan: 'Then you've no more hope?'

'None.'

'Very well,' declared young Robert, 'I will go to them, and if—' He did not finish his threat, for his sister stopped him; but his closed fist indicated that his intentions were anything but pacific.

'No, Robert,' Mary Grant told him. 'No, we must thank Lord and Lady Glenarvan for all they have done, and be eternally grateful to them. We must go now.'

'Mary!' cried Lady Glenarvan, 'where are you going?'

'I shall go and throw myself at the Queen's feet,' the young girl declared, 'and we shall see if she will be deaf to the prayers of two children who are begging for their father's life.'

Lord Glenarvan shook his head, not because he doubted Her

Majesty's kindness, but he knew that Mary Grant could not get to her. Supplicants find it difficult to reach the throne, and it seems as if the sentence that the English put on their steering-wheels were also on the palace doors:—' Passengers are requested not to speak to the man at the wheel.' Lady Helena understood her husband's thoughts, she knew that the step the girl was going to take would be useless. She then had a great and generous idea.

' Mary Grant,' she exclaimed: ' wait, my child, and listen to what I'm going to say.'

The young girl, who was about to leave with her brother, paused, as Lady Glenarvan, with tears in her eyes, but in a firm voice and with a determined face, turned to her husband.

' Edward,' she told him, ' when Captain Grant threw that paper into the sea he confided it to God's care. God has sent it to us. He has entrusted the fate of the unfortunate men to us.'

' What do you mean, Helena? ' asked Lord Glenarvan.

A deep silence reigned among all present.

' I mean,' Lady Glenarvan told him, ' that we ought to be glad to be able to begin our married life by doing a good deed. Well, Edward, for my sake you planned a pleasure voyage. But what pleasure can be greater than that of saving life? '

' Helena! ' cried Lord Glenarvan.

' Yes, you understand me, Edward. The *Duncan* is a good little ship, fit even for a voyage in the Pacific. She could sail round the world, if she had to. Edward, let's go and find Captain Grant! '

At these courageous words, Lord Glenarvan held out his arms to his young wife; he smiled and embraced her, while Mary and Robert kissed her hands, and the servants gave three cheers for the Lady of Luss.

CHAPTER V

THE DUNCAN IS SAIL

LORD GLENARVAN had already thought while he was in London of going to search for Captain Giant and his only hesitation came from the idea of being separated from his wife. But now that Lady Glenarvan herself had suggested going, his hesitation ceased.

Once the departure was fixed, there was not an hour to lose. That very day Lord Glenarvan sent Captain Mangles orders to take the *Duncan* to Glasgow and to get everything ready for a voyage to the Pacific. She was a fine yacht of 210 tons burthen, the first ships which reached the New World those of Columbus and Magellan were far smaller.

The *Duncan* had topmasts and could take advantage of the wind like a clipper. Her engines were of 160 horse power constructed on a new system and very powerful. With all steam on, she could go at a greater speed than any reached before on her trial trips in the Clyde, her patent logbook registered seventeen knots. She was well fitted for a journey round the world, and Captain Mangles had only to see to her interior arrangements.

His first care was to enlarge the bunkers so as to carry the greatest possible quantity of coal for it would be difficult to renew the supply of fuel during the voyage. The same precaution was taken about the steward's room and Mangles laid in provisions for two years; he also bought a small cannon and installed it on the forecastle in case arms might be needed. He knew what he was about, although he had only commanded a pleasure yacht. He was counted amongst Glasgow's finest skippers, he was thirty years old and though his features were rough they denoted courage and kindness. He had been brought up at the castle and the Glenarvans had made a sailor of him. During his long voyages, he had often given proof of skill, energy, and presence of mind and when Lord Glenarvan offered him the command of the *Duncan*, he accepted it willingly, for he loved the laird of Malcolm Castle and sought every opportunity of showing it.

The mate, Tom Austin was a worthy old sailor, the crew con-

sisted of twenty-five men, including the captain and mate, they all came from Dumbartonshire, and formed a veritable clan, bagpipes and all. They were delighted when they heard where they were bound for.

The captain did not forget to prepare Lord and Lady Glenarvan's cabin for a long voyage. He also had cabins fitted up for Captain Grant's children, as Helena had not been able to refuse Mary permission to follow her on the *Duncan*. As to young Robert, he would have hidden himself in the hold sooner than not go, and he insisted on going as a sailor. Lord Glenarvan consented, and he was placed under Mangles' care.

To complete the passenger list, it will suffice to name Major MacNabbs. He was a man of fifty, with a calm regular face, who went where he was told to go, an excellent and perfect character, modest, silent, peaceful, and gentle; always agreeing with everything and everyone, never arguing, and therefore never quarrelling; he went up to a breach in a fortress wall with the same step as he used to go to bed, ruffled at nothing, not even a cannon ball. He not only possessed the vulgar courage of the battle-field, but, better still, moral courage, firmness of soul. He was a Scotsman from head to foot, and he had gained his majority in the 42nd Regiment of the Highland Black Watch, whose companies are formed of Scottish gentlemen. MacNabbs, as cousin to the Glenarvans, lived at Malcolm Castle, and accompanied his cousins on board the *Duncan*.

As soon as the yacht arrived at Steamboat Quay, Glasgow, she monopolised public curiosity, a large crowd came every day to stare at her. In a month she would be ready to start, and her departure was fixed for 25th August, as that would allow her to reach the southern latitudes in the beginning of spring.

At eight in the evening on 24th August, the passengers and crew of the *Duncan* repaired to Glasgow cathedral; an immense crowd accompanied them. There the Reverend Morton implored the blessing of Heaven on the expedition; and Mary Grant prayed for her benefactors, and shed tears of gratitude to God; then the assembly dispersed in profound emotion.

By eleven they were all on board, and the captain made his final preparations. At midnight the fires were lighted, and the sails reefed, for the wind was blowing from the south-west, and could not help the ship on her way. Mangles had no pilot, for he knew the Clyde well, and he managed the yacht admirably; she was completely obedient to her helm. By three next morning the

Duncan was passing the rocks of Dumbarton; two hours later she was in the Firth of Clyde; at six she doubled the Mull of Cantyre, and was sailing in the open sea.

CHAPTER VI

THE PASSENGER IN CABIN SIX

DURING THE first day's sailing there was a strong sea on, and the *Duncan* rocked considerably, the ladies did not appear upon deck, but stayed in their cabins, which was as well. But the next day the wind settled in one quarter, the captain had sail spread, and the vessel rocked and pitched less. At early dawn Lady Glenarvan and Mary Grant were able to join Lord Glenarvan, the major, and the captain upon the deck. The sunrise was magnificent, and the vessel glided on in the midst of a splendid irradiation, her sails seemed to be spreading themselves out to catch the sun's rays. The passengers contemplated the radiant spectacle in silence.

'The day has begun well, Lady Glenarvan commented at last. I do hope the wind will favour us.'

'We couldn't have a better! Helen' answered Lord Glenarvan, 'at present we've nothing to complain of.'

'Will the voyage take long, Edw'nd?'

'You must ask the captain that,' said Glenarvan. 'Are you satisfied with your ship, Mangles?'

'Quite satisfied, my lord,' replied Mangles, 'we're going at seventeen knots. If we can keep up this speed we shall cross the line in ten days, and in less than five weeks we shall double Cape Horn.'

You heard that, Mary,' said Lady Glenarvan, 'in less than five weeks.'

'Yes, Lady Glenarvan,' the young girl answered. 'I heard it, and the captain's words made my heart beat.'

'How do you like sailing, Miss Grant?' asked Lord Glenarvan.

'Pretty well, my lord. I think I shall soon get used to it.'

'And how is young Robert getting on?'

'Oh, Robert,' smiled Mangles. 'when he's not in the engine room, he's up the masts. He laughs at sea sickness. Look, can you see him?' And the captain pointed towards the foremast, where Robert was hanging a hundred feet in the air. Mary could not restrain a movement of anxiety.

'Oh, he won't hurt, miss,' said the captain, 'I'll take care of

him. When Captain Grant sees him he'll be an accomplished sailor.'

'Don't you admire our *Duncan*, Miss Mary?' asked Lord Glenarvan.

'Yes, my lord; all the more because I know a great deal about ships, for I always used to play about on my father's; he ought to have made a sailor of me, then I'd be able to lend a hand.'

'If you talk like that,' answered Lord Glenarvan, 'you'll make a great friend of Captain Mangles, for he thinks there is no profession in the world like a sailor's. He can't understand any one choosing another, not even a woman. Can you, John?'

'I think there's nothing like it, my lord, though I would rather see a woman on the poop than reefing a sail. I like to hear them talk that way.'

'Above all, it's the *Duncan* they're admiring,' Glenarvan replied.

'She deserves all the admiration she gets,' Mangles said proudly.

'As you're so proud of your yacht,' replied Lord Glenarvan, 'you make me want to go over her and see how our sailors are off between decks.'

'I shall be delighted, my lady; I'll go and fetch Olbinett.'

Olbinett was the yacht's steward, and he fulfilled his duties with zeal and self importance. When he came Lord Glenarvan told him: 'We're going round the yacht; I hope we shall find breakfast ready when we come back.'

Olbinett bowed gravely.

'Are you coming, too, major?' asked Lady Glenarvan.

'If you wish,' answered MacNabbs.

'Let him stop and sm'e,' said Lord Glenarvan; 'he's an intrepid smoker, Miss Grant; I believe he even smokes in his sleep.'

The major made a sign of assent, and Lord Glenarvan's guests went down between decks. MacNabbs remained alone silently meditating, as was his custom, and wrapping himself in thick clouds of smoke; he stayed quite still, watching the sea in the ship's wake. After some moments of mute contemplation, he turned and saw a new arrival opposite him. If anything could surprise him, the major would have been surprised, for the passenger was absolutely unknown to him.

The man he saw was tall and thin and might be forty; he looked like a long nail with a big head; his head was large, his forehead high, his nose long, his mouth wide, and his chin prominent. He hid his eyes behind enormous round spectacles, and his

look seemed to have the indecision peculiar to the nyctalops, who see best at night. His expression denoted intelligence and gaiety; he lacked the crabbed look of those grave personages who never laugh, and whose emptiness is covered by a serious mask. He showed that he knew how to take men and things by their best side.

But even without having heard him speak, it was easy to see that he was a great talker and an absent-minded one, like men who do not see what they are looking at, or hear what they are listening to. He wore a travelling-cap, strong yellow boots and leather gaiters, brown velvet jacket and trousers, both full of pockets stuffed with portfolios, pocket-books, and a thousand other things, embarrassing and useless, without speaking of a telescope slung across his shoulder. His bustling manner formed a singular contrast to the major's placidity. He walked round MacNabbs, looked at him, and questioned him with his eyes without the major's wanting to know whence he came, or where he was going, or what brought him there.

When this enigmatical personage saw his attempts baffled by the major's indifference, he seized his telescope, which when it was pulled out measured over four feet in length. He raised it; pointing it at the horizon he looked attentively through it for five minutes; then he lowered it, and resting it on the deck he leant upon it as if it had been a walking-stick. But his weight made the telescope shut and he lost his balance, and almost fell full length on deck. Any one else would have laughed; but the major did not bat an eyebrow. At last the stranger made up his mind to speak.

'Steward!' he cried, with a foreign accent.

Nobody answered his call.

'Steward!' he repeated, more loudly.

Just then Olbinett was passing to go to the ship's galley situated under the forecastle. He was astonished to hear himself addressed in this way.

'Wherever did he spring from?' he asked himself. 'He can't be a friend of Lord Glenarvan's.' But he went on to the poop and approached the stranger.

'Are you the ship's steward?' the latter asked.

'Yes, sir; but I haven't the honour—'

'Well, I'm the passenger from cabin number six.'

'Number six?' echoed the steward.

'Yes; and what's your name?'

'Olbinett.'

'Well, then, Olbinett, my friend,' the stranger replied 'It's time to think about breakfast. I've had nothing to eat for thirty-six hours, which is pardonable in a man who has travelled without stopping from Paris to Glasgow. What time is breakfast, if you please?'

'At nine o'clock,' Olbinett told him mechanically.

The foreigner tried to consult his watch, but that was a lengthy business, as it was in his ninth pocket.

'Why, it isn't eight yet,' he said. 'Well then, Olbinett, give me a glass of sherry and a biscuit, for I am dying of inanition.'

Olbinett was listening, but he could not understand; the stranger went on talking, and passed from one subject to another with extreme volubility.

'Well,' he asked, 'and where's the captain? Isn't the captain up yet? And the mate, what is he doing? Is he asleep, too? The weather is fine, fortunately, and the ship is going on by itself.'

Precisely as he said the last words, Mangles appeared on the stairs of the poop.

'There's the captain,' said Olbinett.

'I am happy to make your acquaintance, Captain Burton,' the stranger greeted him.

If any one ever was astonished, it was Mangles, not only at hearing himself called Burton, but at seeing this stranger aboard his ship. The other went on: 'Allow me to shake hands with you,' he said; 'if I didn't do so the day before yesterday, it was so that I wouldn't be in your way at starting time. But today, captain, I'm truly happy to see you.'

Mangles opened his eyes and looked from Olbinett to the newcomer.

'Now,' the latter continued, 'our introduction is over, and now we're old friends. We can talk. Tell me if you are pleased with the *Scotia*?'

'What do you mean by the *Scotia*?' said Mangles at last.

'Why the good ship we're on, and which I've heard so much of, as well as of her excellent Captain Burton. Are you any relation to the great African traveller of that name? A great man! My compliments if you are!'

'Sir,' Mangles replied, 'I am not only no relation of the traveller Burton, but I'm not even Captain Burton.'

'Ah!' the unknown decided. 'then you are the mate, Mr. Burdness.' •

Mangles began to understand and he was going to explain, when Lord Glenarvan, his wife, and Miss Grant reappeared on deck. The stranger perceived them, and cried: 'Ah, passengers! *Parfait!* I hope, Mr. Burdness, you will introduce me.' And without waiting for the captain's intervention he advanced with perfect ease.

'Madame' he addressed Miss Grant, 'Miss' to Lady Glenarvan, 'Monsieur' to her husband.

'Lord Glenarvan,' said the captain.

'My lord,' continued the stranger, 'I ask your pardon for introducing myself; but at sea we can't observe all the rules of etiquette. I hope we shall soon make each other's acquaintance, and that, in the company of these ladies, our passage in the *Scotia* will be short and agreeable.'

Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant could not have found anything to say. They were dumbfounded at seeing this stranger on board the *Duncan*.

'Monsieur,' said Lord Glenarvan, 'to whom have I the honour of speaking?'

'To Jacques Eliacin François Marie Paganel, Secretary of the Paris Geographical Society, Honorary Member of the Berlin, Bombay, Darmstad, Leipsic, London, Petersburg, Vienna, and New York Societies; also of the Royal Geographical and Ethnographical East India Institute. I have been, for twenty years of my life, an arm chair geographer; now I am going to India to enter militant science.'

CHAPTER VII

JACQUES PAGANEL

THE SECRETARY of the Geographical Society must have been an amiable person, for all that was said very gracefully. Lord Glenarvan knew at once with whom he had to do; the newcomer's geographical works, his reports on modern discoveries inserted in the society's bulletins, his correspondence all over the world, had made him one of the most distinguished scientific men of France. Glenarvan held his hand cordially to his unexpected guest.

'Now that we know each other,' he said, 'will you allow me ask you a question?'

'Twenty, my lord,' Paganel replied: 'it will be a pleasure to answer them.'

'Was it the night before last you came on board?'

'Yes, at eight o'clock. I jumped out of the Caledonian railway into a cab, and from the cab into the *Scotia*, in which I had taken my passage in Paris. The night was dark. I saw nobody on board. I was very tired with my thirty hours' journey, and knowing that, to avoid sea sickness, it is a good thing to lie down at once, I went to number six cabin, which they had allotted me, went to bed, and slept for thirty-six hours at a stretch.'

Jacques Pagnel's hearers now realised how he came there. The French traveller had mistaken the ship, and had embarked while the crew of the *Duncan* were at the cathedral.

'Then Calcutta is the starting point you've chosen for your travels?' Glenarvan asked him.

'Yes, my lord. I have letters of recommendation to Lord Somerset, the Governor-General, and a mission from the Geographical Society.'

'What mission?'

'I have a curious and useful journey to undertake, traced out for me by my learned colleague, M. Vivien de Saint Martin. I am to go in the track of a number of celebrated travellers. I want to succeed where the missionary Krick so unfortunately failed in 1846; in a word, to survey the course of the Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou, which waters Thibet at the south of the Himalayas, and

to see if that river does not join the Bramapootra in the north east of Assam.'

Paganel spoke with enthusiasm. It would have been as impossible to stop him as the Falls of Niagara

'That would be a glorious thing to do, Monsieur Paganel, but I'm sorry to say that, for the present at least, you must give up your intention of visiting India'

'Renounced it! Why?'

'Because you're turning your back to India'

'But Captain Burton—'

'I'm not Captain Burton,' said Mangles

'But the *Scotia*?'

'This ship isn't the *Scotia*'

Paganel's astonishment was unbounded. He stared alternately at Lord Glenarvan, who looked serious, at Lady Glenarvan and Mary Grant, who looked sympathetic, at Mangles, who was laughing, at the major, who did not move an eyebrow; then, shrugging his shoulders and bringing his spectacles down from his forehead to his eyes 'You're joking!' he cried

But at that moment he looked at the steering wheel, which bore the following inscription

DUNCAN

Glasgow

The Duncan! cried he, in despair

Then he rushed down the staircase and went to hide his grief in his cabin. As soon as the unfortunate savant had disappeared everybody except the major laughed outright. To mistake your train, and go to Dumbarton instead of Edinburgh could be understood, but to mistake your ship, and sail for Chili when you mean to go to India, was the height of distraction.

Monsieur Paganel is used to such mistakes, he's well known to be the most absent minded even of savants, said Lord Glenarvan.

'But what are we going to do with the poor gentleman?' said Lady Glenarvan. 'We cannot take him to Patagonia.'

'Why not?' asked MacNabbs, gravely, 'we're not responsible for his absence of mind. If he were in a train, it wouldn't stop!'

'No, but he would get down at the first station,' replied Lady Glenarvan.

'Well, said Glenarvan, 'that's what he can do at the first place we touch at'

At that moment Paganel, piteous and ashamed came up on

deck again, after seeing that his luggage was on board. He walked up and down, looking at the masts, and questioning the silent horizon of the open sea. At last he came back to Lord Glenarvan.

'Where's the *Duncan* going to?' he asked.

'To Concepcion, in South America.'

'To Chili!' cried the unfortunate geographer. 'and my mission to the Indies! What will M. de Quatrefages and the others say? How can I attend a meeting again?'

'Come, M. Paganel,' Lord Glenarvan reassured him. 'do not despair. All may be arranged, and you won't be delayed very long. The Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou will wait for you in the mountains of Thibet. We shall soon touch at Madeira, and there you will find a ship to take you back to Europe.'

'Thank you, my lord, I must be resigned to it. But we may call this a singular adventure; such things only happen to me. And my cabin on board the *Scotia*!'

'You must give up the *Scotia* for the present.'

'But,' said Paganel, after looking once more round the ship. 'the *Duncan* is a pleasure-yacht!'

'Yes, sir,' answered Mangles. 'and it belongs to Lord Glenarvan.'

'Who begs you to accept his hospitality,' said Glenarvan.

'A thousand thanks, my lord.' Paganel replied. 'I am grateful, but allow me to make a simple observation. India is a fine country; it offers marvellous surprises, and the ladies do not know it, I daresay.'

'Well, the man at the helm has only to turn the wheel, and the yacht *Duncan* would sail as easily for Calcutta as for Concepcion, and as this is a pleasure trip—'

The looks of his audience cut him short.

'M. Paganel,' said Lady Glenarvan, 'if it were only a question of a pleasure trip. I should say let us all go to India, and Lord Glenarvan would, too; but the *Duncan* is going to find some persons shipwrecked on the coast of Patagonia, and she cannot change her humane destination.'

In a few minutes the French traveller knew all; he heard about the providential finding of the documents, the history of Captain Grant, and Lady Glenarvan's generous offer.

'Madame,' he said, 'allow me to admire your conduct in all this affair, and to admire it without reserve. I should be sorry to delay your yacht for a single day.'

'Will you join our expedition, then?' asked Helena.

'It is impossible, madame; I must fulfil my mission. I shall land at the first place you touch at.'

'At Madeira, then,' said Mangles.

'So be it. I shall go from there to Lisbon, and wait at Lisbon for a ship.'

'Well, M. Paganel,' Lord Glenarvan agreed, 'what you wish shall be done. For my part, I am happy to see you on board. I hope you will not be too dull in our company.'

Before the end of the day Paganel was everybody's friend. He asked to be shown the famous document, which he studied long and minutely—though no other interpretation seemed to him possible. Marv Grant and her brother inspired him with the greatest interest. He gave them hope, and the way he predicted certain success to the *Duncan* made the young girl smile. If it were not for his mission, he declared, he would accompany them.

When he knew that Lady Glenarvan was the daughter of William Tuffnel, he exploded in admiring interjections. He had known her father. They had often written to each other when Tuffnel was an honorary member of the society. It was he who had introduced him. What a pleasure to sail with Tuffnel's daughter!

CHAPTER VIII

THE EXPEDITION'S NEW MEMBER

THE YACHT favoured by the currents off the North of Africa, made rapid progress towards the Equator. On 30th August they sighted Madeira, and Glenarvan faithful to his promise, offered to touch there to land his guest.

'My dear lord,' answered Paganel, 'I will not stand on ceremony with you. Before you knew of my presence on board, did you mean to stop at Madeira?'

'No,' said Glenarvan.

'Well, then, allow me to profit by the consequences of my absence of mind. Madeira is too well known. It offers nothing interesting to a geographer. Everything has been said and written about it, and besides it is declining as a vine-growing country. In eighteen thirteen they made twenty two thousand pipes, and now they scarcely make five hundred. It would be an affliction spectacle. If it's all the same to you, let's touch at the Canaries.'

'Canaries are on our way,' Glenarvan assured him, 'so we'll touch there.'

'I always wanted to see the Peak of Teneriffe,' remarked Paganel. 'Here's a good opportunity and I'll profit by it while I'm waiting for a ship to take me back to Europe.'

'As you please, M. Paganel,' answered Glenarvan, laughing, and not without some reason.

The Canaries are not far from Madeira. Only 250 miles separate the two groups, a trifle for a steamer like the *Duncan*. On 31st August, at two in the afternoon, the captain and Paganel were on deck. The Frenchman was asking questions about Chili; all at once the captain interrupted him and pointing south to a spot on the horizon. 'M. Paganel!' he said.

'Yes, captain.'

'Look there, don't you see anything?'

'No.'

'You're not looking in the right place.'

'I still don't see anything.'

'There are none so blind as those who won't see. It's the Peak of Teneriffe, although we're still forty miles off.'

Whether Paganel wishes to see or not, a few hours later he had to give in to the evidence.

'Now do you see it?' asked Mangles.

'Yes, yes, perfectly,' Paganel replied; 'and so that's what they call the Peak of Teneriffe? It doesn't look very high.'

'It's eleven thousand feet above sea level.'

'That's not so high as Mont Blanc.'

'Quite likely; but if you wanted to climb it, you'd find it high enough.'

'What is the use of climbing it after Humboldt and Bonplan? Humboldt was a great genius. He climbed that mountain, and gave a description of it, which leaves nothing to be desired; he told us all about the five zones; the wine zone, the laurel, pine, and heath zones, and lastly, the barren zone. It was at the very summit he stood where there wasn't even room to sit down. From the top, he could see as much space as a quarter of Spain. Then he went down into the volcano to its very depths, and reached the bottom of the crater. What could I do after that great man?'

'He hasn't left much,' Mangles agreed. 'It is a pity, for you'll be very dull while you're waiting for a ship.'

'But, Mangles, don't you touch at the Cape Verde Islands?'

'Yes, we're going to touch there for coal.'

'Then I'll go on there,' Paganel decided; 'the Cape Verde Islands aren't far from Senegal, where I'll find some countrymen. I know they say that those islands aren't interesting, and that they're unhealthy; but everything is interesting to a geographer. Seeing is a science. Some people have eyes and see not, but I am not of their school.'

On 2nd September, the *Duncan* crossed the tropic of Cancer at seven o'clock in the morning. The weather then changed; it was continually wet and heavy, the rainy season, *le tempo das aquas*, as the Spaniards call it, a horrid season for travelling, but useful to the inhabitants of the African Islands, which have few trees, and consequently little water. The sea was very rough, and prevented the passengers' stopping on deck, but the conversation in the saloon was no less lively.

On 3rd September Paganel got his luggage ready for landing. The *Duncan* then passed the Island of Mayo, all sand, unfertile, and desolate; she dropped anchor at Porto Praya. The weather was wretched, and although the bay is sheltered, the surf was extremely violent. The rain fell in torrents, and scarcely allowed the town to be seen: it is built on a plain, in a terraced form, with a background of volcanic rocks 300 feet high. Lady Glenarvan was unable to visit the town as she wished, and the coal could

not be got on board without great difficulty. The passengers had to keep below, and of course they all talked about the weather except the major, who would have contemplated Noah's flood with complete indifference.

' You can't brave such weather as this, M. Paganel,' Lady Glenarvan protested.

' It won't hurt me,' he answered. ' I'm only afraid for my luggage and instruments. Everything will be spoiled.'

' You'll be all right when once you get to the town,' Lord Glenarvan assured him; ' your lodgings won't be very clean, certainly; you'll have the company of monkeys and pigs. But a traveller can't be too fussy. Besides, you may hope to embark for Europe in six or eight months.'

' Six or eight months! ' cried Paganel.

' At least,' answered Glenarvan. ' The Cape Verde Islands aren't much frequented by ships during the rainy season; but you can employ your time well. The islands are little known; their topography, climatology, ethnography, are all unknown; there's much to be done.'

' You will have the rivers to survey,' Lady Glenarvan suggested.

' There aren't any.'

' Well, the streams, then.'

' There aren't any of them either.'

' You'll have to study the forests.' the major declared.

' There are no forests without trees, and there are no trees.'

' A nice country! ' was the major's only comment.

' Console yourself with the mountains, then,' said Lord Glenarvan.

' They aren't high, and they aren't very interesting, my lord; and besides, that work has been done. My usual luck.'

' By whom, pray? ' asked Lady Glenarvan.

' By M. Charles-Sainte-Claire Deville, who was on board *La Décidée* when she touched here, and he visited the most interesting summit, the volcano on Fogo Isle. What could I do after him? '

' That's a pity,' Helena. ' What will become of you, M. Paganel? '

Paganel kept silent for a few minutes.

' Decidedly,' Glenarvan told him, ' you'd have done better to land at Madeira, even though they don't make much wine there now.'

Paganel was still silent.

- 'I should wait,' the major suggested.
- 'Where do you intend to touch at next?' Paganel asked Lord Glenarvan.
- 'Nowhere before Concepcion.'
- 'That's tremendously out of my road.'
- 'No; as soon as you pass Cape Horn you'll be on it; besides,' Glenarvan added seriously, 'the inhabitants of the Pampas are Indians as much as the inhabitants of the Punjab, and you can earn the gold medal anywhere, amongst the Cordilleras as well as in the mountains of Thibet.'
- 'But the Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou?'
- 'Oh, the Rio Colorado will do just as well. It's very little known and its place on the map is often based on sheer imagination.'
- 'Yes, there are errors of several degrees. I daresay, if I'd asked the Geographical Society, they'd have sent me to Patagonia instead of India. I didn't think of it.'
- 'An effect of your usual absence of mind.'
- 'Come, M. Paganel, come with us,' Lady Glenarvan spoke in her most engaging voice. 'You'll help us in our quest; and what can be better than putting science at the service of humanity?'
- 'Do you really want me to stay, my friends?' asked Paganel.
- 'Of course we do; and I believe you want to stay yourself.'
- 'That I do!' declared the learned geographer, 'but I was afraid of being indiscreet.'

CHAPTER IX

MAGELLAN STRAIT

EVERYBODY ON board was delighted when this decision was announced. Young Robert hugged Paganel, who said that he would make the lad a geographer. So, as Mangles had undertaken to make him a sailor, Glenarvan a gentleman, the major a brave man, Lady Clenarvan a good and generous person, and Mary Grant a grateful pupil to them all, it was clear that he ought to turn out accomplished.

When the *Duncan* had taken on her supply of coal, she sailed westward, crossing the Equator on 7th of September. The voyage went on pleasantly and all of them were hopeful. In this quest for Captain Grant, the sum of probabilities seemed to increase every day. The captain was one of the most confident, and his confidence came especially from his wish to see Mary Grant happy. He had begun to take an interest in the young girl, and he hid this so well that everybody on board noticed it, except Mary Grant and himself.

As to Paganel, he was probably the happiest man in the southern hemisphere; he passed his days in studying maps, with which he covered the saloon table—this gave rise to daily disputes with Olbinett, who could not lay the table-cloth. But the geographer had all the passengers on his side except the major, who was quite indifferent to all geographical questions, especially at dinner time. Having discovered a cargo of dog eared books in a coffer, and amongst them a number of Spanish works, Paganel resolved to learn the language of Cervantes, which nobody on board knew: he thought it would be useful in Chili. Thanks to his polyglot aptitudes, he hoped to speak it before they reached Concepcion, and he was constantly heard muttering heterogeneous syllables. During his leisure moments he did not fail to give practical instruction to young Robert, by teaching him the history of the coasts the *Duncan* was so rapidly approaching. Discussing Christopher Columbus, he said that the great navigator died without knowing that he had discovered a new world. All the audience protested, but Paganel persisted in his statement.

'Nothing is more certain,' he added. 'I don't want to detract from his fame, but such is the fact. At the end of the fifteenth

century the question of facilitating communication with Asia, and seeking the road to the east, by going west, was the great problem of the time. That is what Columbus attempted. He made four voyages, touched Central America on the coast—which he took to be part of Japan or China—and died without knowing the existence of the great continent, to which he did not even bequeath his name.'

'It's difficult to believe that,' Lord Glenarvan put in. 'But what navigators found out the truth?'

Paganel recited a brief history of the early explorers of South America. He especially praised Amerigo Vespucci, from whom the Continent was named, and Magellan, who had discovered the Strait which bears his name. When they entered it, Paganel watched the moving panorama with delight, and his only vexation was his failure to see any Patagonians.

'I doubt if they exist, they have so many names, and there's no agreement about their size either,' he commented. 'Magellan says their heads hardly came up to his waist, and Drake claims that Englishmen are taller than the tallest Patagonians. Cavendish assures us that they are tall and robust. Hawkins makes giants of them. Two others made them out eleven feet high. Some give them an average height, whilst yet others affirm that the Patagonians are six feet six inches high. M. d'Obigny, who knows these countries best, says they have an average height of five feet four inches.'

'But,' asked Lady Glenarvan, 'what is the truth?'

'They have long bodies and short legs,' explained Paganel. 'and they are six feet high when they're sitting down, and five feet when they stand up.'

At last, thirty-six hours after they left the Strait, the rock of Cape Pilares rose above the *Duncan*, and an immense, open, and sparkling sea lay before her.

CHAPTER X

THE THIRTY-SEVENTH PARALLEL

A week later the *Duncan* sailed into Talcahuano Bay, fortytwo days after leaving the Clyde.

Glenarvan and Paganel went on shore at once. The learned geographer wanted to make use of the Spanish language he had so conscientiously studied, but to his great astonishment he could not make himself understood.

'It's because I haven't got the accent,' he said.

'Let's go to the Custom house,' Glenarvan suggested.

There they made him understand, with the help of some English words and much gesticulating, that the English Consul resided at Concepcion, an hour's drive away. Glenarvan procured two horses, and soon they entered the town.

Without losing an instant, Glenarvan went to the house of Her Majesty's Consul. He was very politely received, and when the Consul knew Captain Grant's story he promised to get all possible information about it. As to the question whether the *Britannia* had been wrecked on the shores near the 37th parallel, he answered it in the negative. No such report had reached him or his colleagues.

Glenarvan was not discouraged however. He went back to Talcahuano, and spent neither pains nor money, and he sent agents along the coasts. But it was all without result, and they had to conclude that the *Britannia* had left no traces of her wreck. Six days after their arrival he described his want of success. Mary Giant and her brother could not contain their grief. Lady Glenarvan tried to console them, but what could she say? Paganel had again picked up the document again, and was studying it very attentively.

'What's to be done now?' asked Lord Glenarvan.

'I think it's quite clear that there are some words on this document we've read wrongly,' Paganel suggested. 'I believe Captain Giant wrote "are prisoners," instead of "will be made prisoners," and that the poor fellows were in the hands of the Indians when they wrote this paper.'

'But the bottle could only have been thrown into the sea when the vessel struck, and that's why that latitude must indicate where she was wrecked.'

'But suppose it wasn't thrown into the sea at all, but into one of the rivers which flow into it?' said Paganel.

An astonished silence followed this answer, and a ray of hope shone in the eyes of his auditors.

'Then what do you advise?' asked Glenarvan.

'My advice is to search the thirtyseventh parallel at the place where it touches the American coast, and to follow it straight along till it touches the Alantic. Perhaps we shall meet with some traces of the shipwrecked men.'

'It's a feeble chance,' the major commented.

'Yes, but it is one,' continued Paganel, unfolding a map of Chili and the Argentine provinces. 'Look where the parallel runs. It crosses the Andes, descends across the Pampas. Look at the rivers the bottle might have flowed down. There is the Rio Negro and the Rio Colorado, and their tributaries. Captain Grant may be amongst a tribe of Indians in one of the gorges of the Sierras: if they are few in number, we rescue the captain ourselves, and if they're too numerous we shall meet the *Duncan* again on the eastern coast, and go to Buenos Ayres, and there get a detachment of soldiers, who, under Major MacNabbs, will soon set the prisoners free.'

'Well, there's no hesitation possible now.' Lord Glenarvan agreed, 'and we must set out as soon as we can. What route must we take?'

'Look, here it is on the map. We start between Rumena Point and Carniero Bay, cross the mountains by the Antuco Pass, descend the mountains, cross the Rio Colorado, and so forth. At last we reach the province of Buenos Ayres. We cross it, climb the Sierra Tandil, and prolong our search to Medano Point on the shores of the Atlantic.'

Whilst talking Paganel was not even looking at the map. He remembered the works of Humboldt, d'Orbigny and the others, and saw it all in his mind's eye.

'You see, my friends,' he added, 'our route is direct. We shall cover it in thirty days, and we shall arrive at the eastern coast before the *Duncan*.'

'Then the *Duncan* will have to cruise between Capes Corrientes and St. Antonio?' asked the captain.

'Precisely.'

'Now we must settle who's going,' said Lord Glenarvan.

'We don't want too many,' said Paganel; 'Lord Glenarvan, our natural head. the major, your servant—'

'And I!' cried Robert.

'Robert! Robert!' Mary protested.

'Why not?' answered Paganel. 'Travel is good for young people. Then we four, and three sailors from the *Duncan*—'

'Doesn't your lordship mean to take me?' asked Mangles.

'Why, captain, aren't we going to leave what's most precious to us in your care? Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant will have to stay on board.'

'We can't go with you then?' Helena's eyes were veiled by a cloud of sadness.

'We shan't be parted for long, Helena, but if—'

'No; go, I understand you,' answered the brave woman. 'Go and succeed!'

The departure was fixed for 14th October. All the sailors volunteered, and Glenarvan had to let them draw lots which fell to Tom Austin, Wilson, and Mulrady, three vigorous fellows. Everyone was ready at the time fixed, and the passengers met in the saloon. The *Duncan* was getting up steam, and guides and mules were waiting on the shore.

'It's time,' Lord Glenarvan said at last.

'Go, dear,' Helena repressed her emotion.

Lord Glenarvan kissed her, whilst Robert clung to Mary Grant.

'And now, dear comrades' said Jacques Paganel, 'a shake of the hands, one that will last to the shores of the Atlantic!'

It was much to ask, but some of the grips he got nearly met his wishes. Everybody then went up on deck, and the seven travellers left the *Duncan*. They soon reached the quay, and Lady Glenarvan, from the poop, called out a last 'God help you!'

'He will, madame,' Paganel answered, 'for I assure you we mean to help ourselves.'

CHAPTER XI

ACROSS CHILI

THE NATIVE guides engaged by Lord Glenarvan consisted of three men and a child. The chief muleteer was an Englishman who had resided twenty years in the country, and it was his trade to guide travellers across the passes of the Cordilleras; then he consigned them to the care of a *baqueano*, or Argentine guide, to whom the Pampas was familiar. He had not so completely forgotten his maternal language in the company of Indians and mules that he could not talk to the travellers. He was call'd a *catapaz* and was seconded by two natives and a child of ten. The natives guided the baggage mules and the child rode 'the *madrina*, a little mare who wore bells and walked in front, of the others. The travellers mounted seven of the mules, the *catapaz* one; two others carried provisions and some rolls of stuff to ensure the goodwill of the natives; and the poens, or native guides, went on foot as was their custom.

Mules are useful animals for crossing the Andes; they drink only once a day, and easily go ten leagues in eight hours.

There are no inns on this route from ocean to ocean. Travellers eat dried meat, rice seasoned with pimento, and the game they kill on the way. They drink water from the mountain streams, or rivers on the plain, mixing it with a little rum, of which each person carries a provision contained in a little horn called a *driffler*, though alcoholic drinks must not be abused in a region where the nervous system is particularly liable to excitement. Their saddles were their beds, too—they consisted of sheep skins tanned on one side, covered with wool on the other, and fastened by embroidered straps. A traveller rolled up in one of these need not fear damp nights.

When they started the weather was superb, and though the sky was brilliantly clear, the sea-breezes prevented the heat from being unpleasant. The first day's march was easy, lying along the reedy shores of Talcahuano Bay. They could still see the smoke from the *Duncan*, and all were silent, thinking of their last farewells—all except Paganel, who kept asking himself questions in Spanish, and answering them in the same language.

The catapaz was a taciturn fellow; he spoke little, even to his peons, who knew their business well. If a mule stopped, they urged it on with a guttural cry, and if the cry were not enough, with a pebble flung with a sure hand; their custom is to start at eight, after breakfasting, and to go on till four. When the catapaz gave the signal to halt, the travellers had reached the town of Arauco, situated at the southern end of the bay, and they would have had to march twenty miles farther westward to Carnero Bay to get to the 37th parallel. But Glenarvan's agents had already been over all that part without finding the slightest vestige of the shipwreck, so that another search would be useless, and it was decided that Arauco should be taken as a starting point. The little troop entered the town, and encamped in an inn courtyard.

Whilst the others were preparing supper, Glenarvan, Paganel, and the catapaz walked about the town, where there was nothing particular to see, except a church and the ruins of a Franciscan convent. Paganel was in despair because he could not make himself understood by the inhabitants, they spoke Araucanian, their mother tongue, whose use is general as far as the Straits of Magellan.

As he could not use his Spanish, he used his eyes, and he took great delight in distinguishing the different types. The men were tall, with flat faces, bronzed complexions, smooth chins, a suspicious look in their eyes, and large heads covered with a mass of black hair; they seemed given up to the idleness characteristic of warriors in time of peace. Their wives were employed in household work, seeing to the horses, or digging or hunting, for their lords and masters, but still found time to make turquoise blue ponchos, or national garments, which take two years to produce and never cost less than 100 dollars.

When Paganel returned to take his place at supper, he told his companions that he felt some emotion at being there, as one of his countrymen had once occupied the throne of Araucania. When the major begged him to give the name of this sovereign the geographer proudly named the worthy M. de Tonneins, an excellent man, once a lawyer of Perigueux, who had suffered what dethroned kings call 'the ingratitude of their subjects.' The major having slightly smiled at the idea of a lawyer's making a king, Paganel replied quite seriously that it was perhaps easier for a lawyer to make a good king than it would be for a king to make a good lawyer. A few minutes later the travellers, wrapped up in their ponchos, were fast asleep.

The next day the little caravan crossed the fertile territory of Araucania, rich in vines and flocks, but by degrees the country became desert, with only a few huts from mile to mile belonging to the *rastreadores*, or Indian horse-breakers. Two rivers had to be crossed that day, the Rio de Raque and the Rio de Tubal, but the catapaz found a ford by means of which they were easily passed. The Andes chain stretched before them, but this was only the lower vertebrae of the enormous backbone that supports the whole framework of the New World. At last they stopped in open country, under some gigantic myrtles; the mules were unbridled and allowed to graze at will, and the catapaz and peons watched by turns.

As the weather kept so favourable all the travellers were well, and Glenarvan profited by it to urge a more rapid march. They made thirty-five miles next day, and encamped in the evening on the banks of the Rio Biobio. The country was still fertile, and rich in amaryllis, violet trees, fuchsias, and cactus with golden flowers. A few animals were perceived in the thickets; a heron, a solitary owl, thrushes, represented the feathered tribe. But there were very few natives visible, only a few *quarros*, degenerate children of Indians and Spaniards, who galloped across the plains, with gigantic spurs fastened to their naked feet, and were stained with the blood of their horses. They found no one from whom to ask information, and Lord Glenarvan thought that Captain Grant must have been carried beyond the chain of the Andes, and that their search could be fruitful only in the Pampas.

On the 17th the country undulated more, and indicated approaching mountains; the rios became more frequent as they conformed to the whims of the slopes. Paganel often consulted his maps, and when one of these streams was not inscribed he grew angry, named it, and inserted it. When Glenarvan questioned the catapaz about any detail of the country, the geographer always answered before the guide, who looked wonderstruck.

That same day a road appeared cutting across the route they had so far followed. Glenarvan asked what road it was, and Paganel answered: 'It's the road from Jumbel to Los Angeles.'

Glenarvan looked at the catapaz, who said—'So it is; but have you ever crossed this country before?'

'Yes,' answered Paganel, quite seriously.

'On a mule?'

'No, in an arm-chair.'

Evidently the catapaz did not understand, for he shrugged his shoulders and returned to the head of the troop.

At five they stopped in a gorge a few miles above the little town of Loja: and that night the travellers encamped at the foot of the Sierras, the first steps of the great Cordilleras.

CHAPTER XII

TWELVE THOUSAND FEET IN THE AIR

DIFFICULTIES AND dangers now began. The next important thing to be decided was by what Pass they were to cross the Andes. The catapaz began to say: 'I know only two practicable Passes in this part of the Cordilleras.

'One is Arica Pass, discovered by Valdivia Mendoza, and the other Villarica, situated to the south of the Nevado of that name,' Paganel interrupted him.

'You're quite right,' the guide agreed.

'Well, they're both awkward for us,' continued the savant, 'for one is too far north and the other too far south.'

'Do you know of any other Pass?' asked the major.

'There's the Pass of Antuco,' Paganel replied, 'only half a degree out of our route; it's about seven twentyone thousand feet high, and was discovered by Zamudio de Cruz.'

'Do you know it, catapaz?' asked Glenarvan.

'Yes, my lord, but I didn't suggest it, because it's only a cattle road used by the Indian shepherds.'

'Well,' answered Glenarvan 'where animals go we can go, too; and as it's in a straight line we'll take it.'

The signal to start was immediately given, and they began to mount by an almost imperceptible slope.

About eleven they came to a small lake, a natural reservoir for all the rivers in the neighbourhood. Above the lake extended vast *elanos*, high plains covered with grass, where the flocks of the Indians were grazing. After that the road became steep and stony, and the mules knocked the pebbles down with their shoes, making cascades of stones. About three in the afternoon they came upon some picturesque ruins of a fortress, destroyed in the rebellion of 1770.

'Decidedly,' commented Paganel, 'mountains aren't enough to separate men, and they have to be fortified as well!'

From that point the road became most precipitous, and they had to march in single file. Sometimes, at an abrupt angle, the madrina disappeared, and the little caravan was guided by the far off sound of her bells. Sometimes the windings of the road made it necessary to march in single file, and the catapaz could

talk to his peons, though a crevice of scarcely two cables' length in width, but two hundred deep, separated them.

Vegetation began to get sparse, and the approach to the volcano of Antuco was heralded by lava of ferruginous colour, bristling with yellow needle-shaped crystals. The appearance of the rocks, and their insecurity, indicated that cataclysms were frequent, and, as they changed the whole aspect of the route, this made it difficult to follow. The catapaz hesitated, stopped, looked about him, examined the rocks, and looked for Indian tracks on the friable stone. Glenarvan saw his hesitation, and it made him uneasy, but he thought the muleteer's instinct, like that of the mules, might guide him aright.

For more than an hour the catapaz went on at random, though always getting higher but at last he was forced to stop short. They were then in a narrow gorge, a wall of porphyry barred its exit. The catapaz, after vainly looking for an opening, got off his mule, folded his arms, and waited. Glenarvan went up to him.

'Have you lost your way?' he asked.

'No, my lord,' the catapaz assured him.

'Then we're not on the Antuco Pass?'

'Yes, we are. There are the remains of an Indian fire, and there are traces left by the horses and sheep.'

'Well, then, we can go on by this route?'

'My mules won't be able to. I'm ready to go back and look for another Pass, but I've done all I could, and I can't go any farther.'

'It will cause a long delay?'

'Three days at least.'

Glenarvan then turned towards his companions, and asked—
'Will you go backwards or forwards?'

'We'll follow you,' Tom Austin assured him.

'It would be absurd to turn back,' Pugnac declared 'When once we've got to the top, the descent on the other side is comparatively easy.'

Glenarvan settled with the catapaz, and dismissed him, his peons, and his mules; then the weapons, instruments and food were distributed amongst the seven travellers. On the left slope wound an abrupt path, not wide enough for the mules, and the difficulties were great; but, after two hours of fatigues and windings, Glenarvan and his companions were once more on the Antuco Pass. The road was very difficult, for the last earthquake had disturbed everything; in some places they were almost forced to

climb on hands and knees, the average height of the Andes being from 11,000 to 12,600 feet. Fortunately the season was favourable, for in winter, from May to October, such a climb would have been impracticable; the intense cold rapidly kills the travellers, and those it spares do not escape the violence of the *temporales*, a sort of hurricane peculiar to these regions, which every year peoples the abysses with dead bodies.

The sailors rendered incalculable assistance in this fatiguing work; their strength was always at the service of their companions. Glenarvan kept his eye on Robert, whose age and liveliness often made him imprudent. Paganel advanced with *furie française*. As to the major, he only moved as much as was necessary, neither more nor less, yet he climbed imperceptibly.

At five in the morning the travellers had attained a height of 7,500 feet, and they found themselves on the last limit of the vegetation. Here and there bounded animals who would have made the joy or the fortune of a hunter: the agile beasts must have known this, for they fled at the approach of man. They were llamas, an animal that takes the place of sheep, oxen, and horses, and can live where mules could not; there was also the chinchilla, a little timid, gentle animal, rich in fur, whose hind legs make it look like a kangaroo. These animals were not, however, the final inhabitants of the mountain.

At 9,000 feet, on the snow-line, were the alpaca, with its long silky coat, and a sort of goat without horns, elegant and proud, with fine hair, that the naturalists call *vigogne*, but it scarcely showed itself before flying away over the dazzling white carpets. The travellers had to advance quietly, lest the least noise, by disturbing the air, should produce a fall of the masses of snow suspended seven or eight hundred feet above their heads.

They stopped only once in eight hours, to renew their strength by taking a quick meal; then they continued the ascent, braving the ever increasing dangers; wooden crosses at intervals along their path marked the place of some catastrophe. About two they came to an immense plateau, a sort of desert without the slightest trace of vegetation, and there the little company, notwithstanding their courage, showed that they were thoroughly exhausted. At three Glenarvan stopped.

'We must take some rest,' he said for he saw that no one else would make the suggestion.

'We must have some shelter before we can do that,' Paganel

reminded him. 'We must get to the eastern slope first, and there, perhaps, we shall find a hut to take refuge in.'

'Are you all of that opinion?' asked Glenarvan. 'It means two hours more walking, remember, and I don't think Robert can do it.'

'I'll carry the boy,' Mulrady offered.

They all agreed that this was the best thing to do, and continued their toilsome ascent. The rarefaction of the air at that height produced the painful sensation known under the name of '*puna*', the blood oozing from their gums and lips, and they often had to take breath. That fatigued them as much as the reflection of the sun's rays on the snow, and they began at last to be seized with giddiness and to fall, being able to advance only by crawling on their knees. Glenarvan kept looking round at the snow and up at the peaks in despair, when the major stopped and said calmly --

'There's a hut.'

CHAPTER XIII

THE DESCENT

NO ONE but MacNabbs would have distinguished the hut from the surrounding peaks, so thick was the carpet of snow that covered it. It took Wilson and Mulrady half-an-hour to clear the opening, but when this was done the little troop crawled in with much satisfaction. This hut, or *casucha*, built by the Indians, was made of adobes, a sort of brick baked in the sun; it was twelve feet square, and constructed on a basaltic rock. Stone steps led up to its only opening, and ten persons could easily find room in it. The walls would hardly be watertight, but they were some protection against the cold, which the thermometer registered as 10° below zero, and it contained a sort of hearth, built of badly-jointed bricks.

'There's a hearth, but how are we to get any fuel?' asked Mulrady.

'There must be something to burn as long as there's a chimney,' MacNabbs pointed out.

'MacNabbs is right,' Glenarvan agreed. 'I'll be stoker and look for fuel, while you get supper.'

'Wilson and I will go with you,' offered Paganel.

'Can't I go, too?' Robert got up.

'No, rest yourself, my boy,' Glenarvan answered. 'There will still be boys when you're a man.'

Glenarvan, Paganel, and Wilson went out of the casucha. It was six and, notwithstanding the calmness of the atmosphere, the cold was intense. Paganel had taken his barometer, which indicated a height of 11,700 feet. That part of the Cordilleras was only about a thousand yards lower than Mont Blanc, and if these mountains had presented the difficulties with which the Swiss giant bristles, or if the wind had blown a hurricane, not one of the travellers could have crossed the chain.

The view from the spot was magnificent, and Wilson had to recall Glenarvan and Paganel from their contemplation of the sunset on the glaciers, the volcano to the south, and the effect of its flames on the surrounding peaks. The three men gathered together a quantity of the dried lichen which covered the rocks, and the root of a plant called *elareta*; they carried the precious

fuel back to the casucha, and piled it up on the hearth. The fire was difficult to light, and still more so to keep up, as the rarified air did not provide enough oxygen to keep it burning; at least, that was the reason the major gave.

'Here,' he added, 'we shan't want two hundred and twelve degrees of heat to make water boil; it boils at less than two hundred.'

MacNabbs was not mistaken, and the thermometer, plunged into the tea kettle when the water boiled, marked only 188°. The hot coffee it made was drunk with pleasure, but the dried meat did not seem quite enough, which made Paganel complain: 'I wish we had some slices of llama; they say it's as good as beef or mutton.'

'Then you aren't satisfied with your supper, Mr. Philosopher?' asked the major.

'Yes, I am satisfied, major, but even you wouldn't sulk before a beefsteak!'

Just then a noise was heard in the distance; it sounded like the cries of a flock of animals.

'Perhaps they're coming on purpose to furnish a supper,' suggested Paganel.

But Glenarvan pointed out that the quadrupeds of the Cordilleras were never met with at such a height.

'Then what can that noise be?' Tom Austin wondered. 'It's coming nearer.'

'Perhaps it's an avalanche,' Mulrady surmised.

'Let us go and see,' the major suggested, picking up his rifle.

They all rushed out of the casucha. Night had come, and the stars were brilliant, but the last quarter of the moon had not yet appeared. The howling came nearer and nearer, and at last a whole avalanche, but an avalanche of animals, invaded the plateau. All the men, except Paganel, threw themselves on the ground. Then a shot was heard: the major had fired at random, an animal fell a few steps away, whilst the remainder of the flock fled up the slopes, lit up by the reflections from the volcano.

'Ah, I have them!' said a voice; it was Paganel's.

'What?' asked Glenarvan.

'Why, my spectacles, to be sure.'

'You were quite likely to lose your spectacles. This animal must have run right over you,' MacNabbs pointed to the one he had just killed.

The sailors lifted it up and carried it back to the hut; it was

a pretty creature, something like a little camel without a hump; it had a fine head, a flat body, long, frail legs, fine cream-coloured hair, and a white belly. Paganel had scarcely looked at it when he exclaimed: 'It's a guanaco!'

'What's a guanaco?' asked Glenarvan.

'An edible animal,' answered Paganel.

'Is it good?'

'Delicious, a meat for Olympus. I knew we should have fresh meat for supper. And what meat! But who's going to cut up the animal?'

'I will,' Wilson volunteered.

'And I'll cook it,' Paganel declared.

'Are you a cook, then, Mr. Paganel?' asked Robert.

'I'm a Frenchman, my boy, and in a Frenchman there's always the making of a cook.'

Five minutes later Paganel placed some large slices of venison on the embers made by the elatetta roots. In ten minutes he had served them up to his companions, and they all made haste to taste the new meat. To his great stupefaction, a general grimace and exclamation of disgust were the result. The poor savant tasted it himself, and had to acknowledge that it was disgusting. His companions began to tease him about his meat for Olympus, until at last a sudden idea came to him.

'I know the reason!' he cried.

'Is it too high?' the major asked quietly.

'No, intolerant major, but it's gone too far. How could I forget that?'

'What do you mean, Mr. Paganel?' asked Tom Austin.

'I mean that the guanaco is good only when it has been killed while resting; if it's hunted too long, it isn't edible. I can tell you, therefore, from the taste, that this animal came a long distance.'

'But what could have happened to frighten the animals so much?' Glenarvan wondered.

But that question Paganel found it impossible to answer, so the wearied men wrapped themselves in their ponchos, put on more fuel, and were soon joining in a chorus of snores, in which Paganel's bass was the loudest.

Glenarvan alone did not sleep. Secret uneasiness kept him awake. He wondered if any cataclysm had driven the guanacos up to such a height. He thought, too, that he could hear a far-off

tumbling something like thunder and that there must be a storm going on beneath them so he went out to see

By that time the moon was risen and the atmosphere was limp and calm not a cloud to be seen either above or below The calm made Glenarvan more uneasy still he looked at his watch and found that it was two in the morning However as he did not feel sure of immediate danger he did not awaken his companions and fatigue sent him at last into a heavy sleep which lasted several hours

Suddenly a heavy crash awakened him and he felt the ground tremble under his feet he saw the hut shake and part of it fall

His companions had been aroused by the crash and they all felt themselves being rushed with the whole plateau down the sides of the mountain They were victims to a phenomenon that occurs occasionally in the Cordilleras in which several miles of ground are moved in a mass and glide towards the plain

They were travelling at the rate of fifty miles an hour, all they could do was to cling with all their strength to the tufts of lichen they could not even speak as it would have been impossible to hear a word Sometimes the mass rolled and pitched like a ship at sea, it tore up trees centuries old and levelled the sides of the mountain Imagine the power of a mass weighing several hundred millions of tons hurled with an ever unceasing speed at an angle of fifty degrees!

No one could tell how long the fall lasted They expected to be hurled down a precipice and nothing but the supreme instinct of self preservation would have made them hold on blinded as they were by the snow breathing with difficulty and half unconscious All at once a shock of inconceivable violence rolled them all off their gliding vehicle at the foot of the mountain For a few minutes nobody moved At last one of them rose giddy from the shock but none the less firm it was a major He shook off the dust which was blinding him and looked around His companions lay on the ground motionless The major counted them One was missing Robert Grant

CHAPTER XIV

A PROVIDENTIAL SHOT

THE EASTERN slope of the Cordilleras inclines gently, and merges imperceptibly, into the plain, on which part of the landslide had come to rest. The travellers had been suddenly hurled from the most barren of desert into as fertile a country as the Normandy of the old world. There were whole forests of apple trees, planted at the time of the Conquest, and sparkling with golden fruit: it was like an abrupt transition from winter to summer. The earthquake was over, and the ground motionless. The commotion had been extremely violent, and the line of mountain crests had been completely altered. It made a new panorama of peaks, and the Pampas guide would have sought his accustomed waymarks in vain.

It was going to be a lovely day, and the sun's rays were gilding the Argentine plains.

It was eight in the morning; Lord Glenarvan and his companions, revived by the major's care, gradually came back to life: they had only been stunned, and were not otherwise hurt. The descent had been made without any trouble on their part, and but for the missing child they would have rejoiced. They had all become fond of him, especially Glenarvan, and when he thought of the boy's calling in vain for help from the bottom of some ravine he was in despair.

'We can't leave here till we've searched every valley and precipice,' he decided. 'You must fasten a cord round me, and lower me down to him. Poor little chap! How shall we dare to find the father if his rescue has cost the life of his child?'

There was a short silence, and then MacNabbs asked, 'Does any one remember just where he disappeared?'

No one answered, and he continued: 'At least you can tell me whom he was nearest to while we were being hurled down.'

'He was next to me,' answered Wilson. 'I saw him holding on to a tuft of lichen less than two minutes before the shock that ended our fall.'

'Are you sure it was only two minutes?'

'Yes, quite sure. It was less than two minutes.'

'Was Robert on your right or left?' the major continued.

'On my left. I remember distinctly.'

'And you were on our left, so he must have disappeared on this side,' the major turned towards the mountain, and pointed to the right. 'If you're right about the time, he must have fallen during the last two miles. We must search for him there, and divide the different zones between us.'

No further word was needed. The six men kept to the right of the line of fall, and carefully searched every thicket and fissure, going down the precipices, and often returning with their clothing in rags, and their feet and hands bleeding, after more than once risking their lives.

But all search was in vain, and at one they met in the valley completely worn out. Glenarvan was in a state of great agitation, and kept repeating, 'I won't go away.'

They all understood and respected his determination.

'We'll wait a little longer,' said Pag incl. 'and take some rest. We shall need it, whether we continue our search or go on.'

The major chose a spot under a clump of trees, and there they set up a temporary camp. Some of the rags, the weapons, and a little dried meat and rice, were all they had left. A river flowed at a little distance and it furnished them with water, rendered turbid though it was by the avalanche. Mulrady lighted a fire, and offered some hot drink to his master, but Glenarvan refused it and lay wrapped in his poncho in a state of complete prostration.

The day was spent thus, and when night came all but he lay down to rest. He wandered off alone on to the mountain stopping occasionally to put his ear to the ground hoping to hear a cry for help and calling repeatedly, 'Robert! Robert!' Echo alone answered him.

When daylight returned his companions found him on a distant plateau, and brought him back to the encampment against his will. His despair was frightful. No one dared suggest leaving the spot, and yet food was beginning to fail. Not far away they should meet with a muleteer and horses to cross the Pampas, and the hour of departure could not be put off long. MacNabbs at last went to him and suggested that they should start.

'Let's wait one more hour,' he implored the others.

And when that hour had passed, he begged for another, and so it went on till about noon. Then MacNabbs hesitated no longer and told Glenarvan that all their lives depended upon a prompt decision.

'Yes yes,' he answered. 'We must start.'

As he spoke, he fixed his eyes on the sky. Suddenly he pointed upwards, and exclaimed. 'Look there!'

Looking up, they saw an enormous bird at a great height.

'It's a condor!' said Paganel.

The bird came more and more clearly into sight. This magnificent creature, formerly worshipped by the Incas, is the king of the Southern Andes, where it attains an extraordinary development. Its strength is prodigious and it often hurls oxen into the depths of the ravines. It attacks sheep, deer, and young calves, and carries them up to its nest on the heights. It often flies 20,000 feet above the ground, higher than man can reach, and, even when out of sight, it can distinguish the slightest object with a power of clear-sightedness which astonishes the naturalists.

The bird gradually approached, sometimes swooping straight down, sometimes flying in enormous circles. Its outstretched wings measured fifteen feet across, and carried it almost without a movement, making its flight calmly majestic, as that of large birds alone is.

The major and Wilson had seized their rifles, but Glenarvan stopped them with a gesture. The bird was wheeling down upon a sort of plateau about a quarter of a mile on the sides of the mountain. Then an idea flashed into his mind.

'That bird can see Robert's body,' he cried. 'Fire, major!'

But it was too late: the bird was hidden behind the rocks. A second as long as a century elapsed, and then the enormous bird flew up again, heavily loaded. A cry of horror rose. The bird held the body of Robert Giant in its clutches: seeing the travellers, it tried to fly off with its prey. Glenarvan seized Wilson's rifle, and tried to take aim, but his hand was trembling.

'Let me do it,' exclaimed the major, and with calm eye and steady hand he aimed at the bird, which was already 300 feet away. But he had not yet pressed the trigger when a report was heard from the valley; white smoke rose between two masses of basaltic rock, and the condor, shot in the head, fell gradually, still with outstretched wings. It had not let go its prey, and it came slowly down on to the ground ten feet from the edge of the Rio.

Glenarvan rushed up to the corpse, followed by his companions. The bird was dead, and Robert's body was hidden under its enormous wings. Glenarvan snatched it out of the bird's clutches, laid it down on the grass, and pressed his ear to Robert's chest. Never did a louder shout of joy ring out than the one he gave:

'He's alive! He's alive!'

In an instant Robert was stripped of his clothes, and his face was bathed with water. He stirred, opened his eyes, looked and murmured, 'Is that you, my lord?'

Glenarvan could not answer; his emotion stifled him, and he knelt and wept beside the child who had been so miraculously saved.

CHAPTER XV

PAGANEL'S SPANISH

AFTER THEIR first delight was over, the travellers thought of the providential shot which had saved the boy's life. The major looked around to find out from whence it came, and saw a very tall man standing at the foot of the mountain about fifty paces off with a gun lying at his feet.

The man was more than six feet high, with broad shoulders and long hair, tied up with leather bands. His bronzed face was red from the eyes to the mouth, black round the eyes, and white on the forehead. Clad in the costume of the frontier Patagonians, he wore a splendid mantle decorated with red arabesques, made of hair from beneath the neck and legs of the guanaque, sewn on with ostrich tendons. Under his mantle he wore a coat of fox-skin, fastened at the waist, and ending in front in a point. From his belt hung a little bag containing the colours with which he painted his face. His boots were formed of ox leather, and fastened to his ankles by crossed leather straps. His expression was superb, and denoted real intelligence, notwithstanding the medley of colours with which his face was painted. He was waiting in a dignified attitude, motionless and grave, on his rocky pedestal; he looked like a statue of patience.

As soon as the major saw him he pointed him out to Glenarvan, who went towards him at once, took his hand and pressed it between his. There was so clear an expression of gratitude in his face that the Indian could not mistake it. He bent his head gently, and pronounced some words that neither the major nor his friend could understand.

Then the Patagonian, after having looked attentively at the strangers changed his language, but the new idiom was no more familiar to them than the first. However, it seemed to Glenarvan that the man was now talking Spanish, of which language he knew a few words.

'*Español?*' he asked.

The Patagonian bent his head, an action which has the same affirmative signification in all nations.

'This is a matter for Paganel,' said the major. 'It's a good thing he took it into his head to learn Spanish.'

They called the geographer, who came up at once and saluted the Patagonian with all a Frenchman's grace, which the native did not seem to appreciate. The major asked him to talk to the man in Spanish. Whereupon he opened his mouth wide so as to pronounce his words distinctly, and said—

'Eos sois um homem de bem.' (You are a kind man.)

The native listened, but he said nothing.

'He can't understand,' complained the geographer.

'Perhaps you haven't got the right accent,' suggested the major.

'Perhaps not. Accents can't be learned by books. But I'll try again,' and he said slowly—*'Sem Duvida, um Patagão.'* (no doubt you are a Patagonian.)

The native still remained mute.

'Dizeme!' (Answer) added Paganel.

Same silence.

'Eos comprehendes?' (Do you understand?)

It was evident that the Indian did not understand, for he answered, but in Spanish—

'No comprendo.' (I don't understand)

Paganel was now considerably annoyed; he moved his spectacles from his forehead to his eyes, as he always did when vexed.

'Hang me if I understand a word of his jargon! It's certainly Araucanian.' And turning towards the Patagonian, he repeated—

'Espanhol?'

'Si, si' answered the native. Paganel's surprise became stupefaction. The major and Glenarvan looked slyly at one another and a smile curled the former's lips as he asked. Don't you think you may have learnt another language instead of—

MacNabbs did not finish, he was stopped by a vigorous 'Oh,' and a shrug from the savant.

'You're going rather too far, major,' said Paganel in a somewhat dry tone.

'You don't seem to understand,' MacNabbs retorted.

'I don't understand, because this native speaks so badly,' replied the geographer, who was beginning to get impatient. 'Here's the book I've been studying every day. Look at it, major, and see if I'm imposing upon you.'

So saying Paganel fumbled in his numerous pockets, and at last brought out a dog-eared book. The major took it and looked at it.

'What work is this?' he asked.

'The *Lusiad*,' answered Paganel; 'an admirable epic poem, which—'

'Why, the *Lusiad* is by Camoens,' cried Glenarvan, 'and Camoens was Portuguese.'

'Camoens! The *Lusiad*! Portuguese!—'

Paganel could not go on. An Homeric laugh interrupted him, for he was now surrounded by all his companions. The Patagonian did not move; he was patient, awaiting the explanation of an incident which must have been perfectly incomprehensible to him.

'Ah, madman, fool that I am!' the geographer burst out at last. 'It's like the Babel confusion of tongues. It was not enough to start for India and arrive at Chili, but I must learn Spanish and speak Portuguese. I shall be throwing myself out of the window instead of my cigar next.'

And thereupon he burst into the most formidable roar of laughter that ever issued from a savant's mouth.

'But now we have no interpreter,' the major pointed out.

'There's enough resemblance between the two languages to make me take one for the other, so there must be enough to let me make myself understood—enough, at all events, to convey our thanks.'

Paganel was right, and he soon exchanged a few words with the native. He learnt that the Patagonian's name was Thalcave, meaning 'Thunder.'

Glenarvan was delighted to hear that the Patagonian was a guide by profession, and would undertake to lead them across the Pampas. Then they all went back to Robert, who stretched out his arms in gratitude to the Patagonian. The latter laid his hand on the child's forehead in silence, and examined the bruised limbs. Then, smiling, he went and gathered some handfuls of wild celery on the banks of the rio and began to rub the boy's body with them. The child's strength began to revive under this delicate treatment, and it was evident that a few hours' rest would restore him completely.

So it was decided to pass the remainder of the day and the night where they were. The Patagonian offered to conduct Glenarvan to a *tolderia* of Indians, about four miles off, where he would find food and everything he needed for the expedition. This proposal, made partly by gestures and partly by what Spanish words Paganel could understand, was accepted, and Glenarvan set out with the two along the banks of the rio.

The count v they traversed was very fertile. Fat pasturages enough to feed an army of animals, large pools, and an inextricable network of rios, gave a verdant humidity to these plains. Swans with black heads disputed the empire of the waters with the numerous ostriches that bounded across the llanos.

Jacques Paganel walked along in a state of perpetual admiration. His exclamations of delight astonished the Patagonian, who found it quite natural that there should be brilliantly-plumaged birds in the air, swans in the ponds, and grass in the meadows.

The savant did not complain of the distance, for he reached the Indian encampment long before he expected it. This tolderia occupied a valley amongst the outlying Andes. There, in cabins made of tree branches, lived about thirty nomad Indians, whose flocks and herds of milch cows, sheep, oxen, and horses, grazed from one pasture to another.

This race was a hybrid type of Araucanians, Pehuenches, and Aucas; they were Ando Peruvians of an olive colour, middle stature, massively built, with almost circular faces, thin lips, high cheek bones, effeminate features, and a cold expression. They were not interesting, but Glenarvan wanted only their horses, and Thalcove made the bargain. It did not take long. They gave seven small horses of Argentine breed, ready harnessed, a hundred pounds of dried meat, some measures of rice, and leather bottles for water, for twenty ounces (about £65) of gold, though they would rather have had wine or rum. Glenarvan wished to buy another horse for the Patagonian, but the native made him understand that it would be useless.

The bargain concluded, they returned to their companions with their purchases. Robert took some supper with the others; he was nearly well again. The remainder of the day was passed in complete repose, and Paganel pestered the Indian with odd bits of Spanish, which the native bore with exemplary patience. The geographer was studying, without a book this time.

'If I don't catch the accent' he told the major, 'I can't help it. I never thought that, one day, I should learn Spanish from a Patagonian.'

CHAPTER XVI

THE RIO COLORADO

THE NEXT day, 22nd October, at eight, Thalcave gave the signal for departure. In the Argentine the ground, between the 22nd and 42nd degree, slopes from west to east, so that the travellers had only to descend a gentle slope to the sea.

When the Patagonian refused the horse that Glenarvan offered him he thought that it was because the guide preferred to go on foot; but he was mistaken. Just as they set out Thalcave gave a peculiar whistle and a magnificent Argentine horse at once emerged from a neighbouring wood and answered to his master's call.

It was a real beauty; its small head, open nostrils, fiery eyes, and general appearance were much admired by the major, who found points of resemblance between it and an English hunter. This beautiful animal was called 'Ihaouka, which, in Patagonian language, means 'bird'. When Thalcave was in the saddle, his horse bounded along under him: he was a consummate horseman, and his harness included the two hunting instruments used in the Argentine Plain—the bolas and lasso. Without noticing the admiration evoked by his natural grace and easy carriage, he took the lead, and they started, either galloping or walking, for trotting seemed unfamiliar to their horses.

At the very foot of the Cordilleras begins the Pampas. At first it extends from the chain of the Andes over a space of 250 miles, covered with small trees and bushes. Then come about 450 miles carpeted with magnificent grass, and ending about 180 miles from Buenos Ayres. From then on to the sea the ground is covered with immense tracts of lucern-grass and thistles. It forms a third part of the Pampas. When the travellers emerged from the gorges of the Cordilleras they came upon some sand dunes, called *medanos*; these are waves incessantly raised by the wind, except when vegetable roots chain them to the ground. This sand is extremely fine; and though to see the ever-varying forms of its waves made an attractive spectacle, the dust it produced was very disagreeable to the eyes.

By six the travellers were tired out; they had come about thirty-eight miles. They saw with pleasure that the hour for sleep

was approaching, and they encamped on the banks of the rapid Neuquem—a rushing rio, with troubled waters, between high red cliffs. It is also called Ramid or Comoe, and takes its rise in lakes known only to the Indians.

The next day and night offered no incident worthy of being related and the travellers went along quickly over an even surface. The heat was not excessive, except at noon, but towards evening a bank of clouds appeared on the south-western horizon, a certain indication of a change in the weather. The Patagonian pointed this out to Paganel, who turned to his companions and said 'We're now going to see what the Pampero is like.'

He explained that this Pampero occurs frequently on the Argentine Plains; it is a very dry wind that blows from the south-west. The night was not pleasant for men sheltered only by their ponchos, for the wind blew with great violence.

The horses lay down on the ground, and the men lay as near them and to one another as possible. Glenarvan feared being delayed if the hurricane kept on, but after having consulted his barometer Paganel reassured him.

'In the ordinary way' he explained, 'the Pampero lasts three days, and the depression of the mercury announces it for certain. But when, on the contrary, the barometer rises—as it is doing now—it blows a gale, but lasts only a few hours.'

'You talk like a book, Paganel,' commented Glenarvan.

'And I am one,' replied Paganel. 'You can turn over the pages as much as you like.'

The book had not been mistaken. At one in the morning the wind fell suddenly, and they could all sleep in peace.

It was 24th October, and the tenth day since they had left Talcahuano. Ninety-three miles still separated them from the point where the Rio Colorado crosses the 37th parallel—a three days' journey. Glenarvan sought every opportunity of getting in touch with the natives. He wanted to ask them about Captain Grant through the mediation of the Patagonian, whom Paganel was just beginning to understand. But they were following a line very little frequented by the Indians, for the roads which cross the Argentine Republic to the Cordilleras lie more to the north. If they happened to meet with some solitary traveller he fled away rapidly, not caring to enter into communication with a troop of eight armed men in a country where *rastreadores*, or robbers of the plain, are frequently encountered.

Their route often crossed important roads, amongst others that

from Carmen to Mendoza; it was covered with the bones of domestic animals, mules, horses, sheep, and oxen left there for the birds of prey, and whitened by the discolouring action of the air. There were thousands of them, and perhaps the dust of many a human skeleton was mixed with that of the humbler animals.

Till then Thalcave had made no comment about the route they were following; in his capacity as guide he must have been astonished to find he was more led than leading. However, if he were surprised, he did not show it but kept the reserve natural to Indians. But that day when they had reached the road spoken of above he stopped his horse, turned to Paganel, and said: 'This is the Carmen road!'

'Yes,' said the geographer in the best Spanish he could muster, 'it goes from Carmen to Mendoza.'

'Aren't we going to take it?' continued Thalcave.

'No,' replied Paganel.

'Where are we going now?'

'Still eastward.'

'But that leads nowhere.'

'Who knows?'

Thalcave was silent, and looked with astonishment at the Frenchman. He did not think for a moment that Paganel was joking, for an Indian is always serious and never imagines that anybody can speak otherwise than seriously.

At that moment Glenarvan came up to Paganel and asked him what Thalcave had said, and why he had stopped.

'He asked me where we are going, and says it is nowhere,' Paganel explained.

'Well, Paganel, couldn't you explain why we always go eastward?'

'It would be very difficult,' Paganel replied, 'for an Indian understands nothing about latitude and longitude, and the document would be nothing but a fantastic story to him.'

'But,' the major commented quite seriously, 'it might be the teller he would not understand; not the tale.'

'Ah! MacNabbs,' replied Paganel, 'now you're doubting my Spanish again, I see that I must try what I can do.'

Paganel turned to the Patagonian and began a speech, frequently interrupted by want of words or from the difficulty of translating idioms and of making an ignorant savage understand details that he must have found almost incomprehensible. The

savant was curious to watch; he gesticulated, articulated, and large drops of sweat ran down his face. When his tongue would carry him no further, he used his arms. He got off his horse, traced a map upon the sand, and put in the lines of latitude and longitude, the two oceans, and the Carmen road. Thalcave looked on tranquilly, without showing whether he could understand it or not. The geographer's lesson lasted more than half an hour; then he was silent; he wiped his face, and looked at the Patagonian.

'Has he understood?' asked Glenarvan.

'We shall see,' replied Paganel, 'but if he hasn't, I give it up.'

Thalcave did not move nor speak. His eyes remained fixed on the figures traced on the sand, which the wind was gradually effacing.

'Well?' Paganel asked him.

Thalcave did not seem to hear. Paganel could already see an ironical smile on the major's lips, and, thinking his honour in question, he was beginning his geographical demonstrations all over again, when the Patagonian stopped him with a gesture.

'You're looking for a prisoner?' he enquired.

'Yes,' answered Paganel.

'And precisely on that line comprised between the rising and the setting sun?' added Thalcave.

'Yes, yes, that's it.'

'And it was your God,' continued the Patagonian, 'who confided to the waves of the vast sea the secret of the prisoner?'

'Yes.'

'Then let His will be done,' answered Thalcave solemnly, 'we shall march eastward, to the sun, if we have to.'

Paganel, triumphing on behalf of his pupil, at once translated these answers to his companions.

'What an intelligent race!' he added 'Out of twenty French peasants nineteen wouldn't have understood my explanations.'

Glenarvan advised Paganel to ask the Indian if he had heard whether any foreigners had fallen into the hands of the Pampas Indians.

'Perhaps,' replied the Patagonian.

At this word, which was at once translated, Thalcave was surrounded by the seven travellers. Their very looks were questions. Paganel went on with his investigation, and translated every Spanish word as the Patagonian uttered it, so that they could all hear it at the same time.

'Have you seen this prisoner?' asked Paganel.

'No; but I've heard about him. He was a brave man, with a lion's heart.'

'A lion's heart!' repeated Paganel. 'Magnificent Patagonian language! You understand, my friends! A brave man!'

'My father!' cried Robert Grant. Then, turning to Paganel, he asked, 'How do they say "It is my father" in Spanish?'

'*Es mio padre.*' answered the geographer.

Robert immediately took Thalcave's hands, and said, '*Es mio padre!*'

'*Suo padre* (his father)?' the Patagonian looked enlightened. He took the boy in his arms, lifted him off his horse, and looked at him with sympathy. His intelligent face was lighted up with a quiet emotion.

But Paganel had not finished his questions. This prisoner, where was he? What was he doing? When had Thalcave heard about him? Thalcave replied that an European was the slave of one of the Indian tribes who wander over the country between the Rio Colorado and the Rio Negro.

'But where was he when you last heard of him?' asked Paganel.

'He belonged to the Cacique Caifoucouia,' Thalcave replied.

'On the line we've followed until now?'

'Yes.'

'And who is this Cacique?'

'The chief of the Poyuches Indians, a man of two words, a man of two hearts!'

'That is to say, false in words and false in action,' said Paganel, after having translated the fine Patagonian image. 'And shall we be able to rescue our friend?' he asked.

'Perhaps; if he's still in the hands of the Indians.'

'How long is it since you have heard about him?'

'The sun has brought back two summers into the Pampas sky since then.'

Glenarvan was delighted to find that the answer agreed with the date on the document. But there was still one more question.

'You speak of one prisoner,' said Paganel. 'Weren't there three?'

'I do not know,' answered Thalcave.

'And you know nothing of his present position?'

'Nothing whatever.'

This ended the conversation. Next day, 25th October, the tra-

vellers set out with renewed energy to pursue their journey eastward. The plain extended in unvarying monotony, and formed an endless space, called *traversia* in the language of the country. The clayey soil was flat; not a stone lay on the ground, except in some dried-up ravines, or on the banks of artificial ponds dug by the hands of the Indians. At long intervals appeared low forests with black summits, amongst which the white locust trees appeared, the pod containing a sweet, agreeable, and refreshing pulp; then, some thickets of turpentine trees, wild broom, and meagre thorn bushes, that already betrayed the infertility of the soil.

The 26th was fatiguing. They wanted to reach the Colorado, and the horses went along at so good a speed that they did so the same evening at longitude $69^{\circ} 45'$; its Indian name is Coby Leubu, which means 'great river.' Its flow of water lessens as it approaches the Atlantic, either through evaporation or through soaking into the ground.

When they reached the Colorado, Paganel first bathed himself 'geographically' in its waters, coloured by reddish clay. He was surprised to find it so deep, because of the melting of the snows under the first sun of summer. The river was so wide that the horses could not swim across it, but fortunately, a few hundred yards upstream, they found a wicker bridge suspended by leather thongs in the Indian fashion. This enabled the little troop to cross the river, and to encamp on the left bank.

During the next two days the journey was devoid of incidents. The same monotony and sterility prevailed. The ground became very damp and they had to pass *canadas*, inundated depressions, and *esteros*, permanent lagoons clogged with aquatic herbs. In the evening, the horses stopped on the shores of a vast lake, whose waters were strongly mineral—it was the Ure Lanquem, named 'bitter lake' by the Indians.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PAMPAS

THE ARGENTINE Pampas extend from the 34th to the 40th degree of south latitude. The word *Pampa* of Araucanian origin, signifies 'plain of herbs' and is justly applied to this region. The geologist would find abundant riches in its tertiary strata; this contains quantities of antediluvian bones which the Indians attribute to the tall races of extinct *tatous*, and under the vegetable soil is buried the primitive history of these countries.

The American Pampas is a geographical type like the savanas of the great lakes, or the steppes of Siberia. Its climate has greater extremes of heat and cold than that of Buenos Aires, because it is more continental. For, according to Paganel, the heat of summer, stored up in the ocean, is slowly given back during the winter. For this reason the temperature of islands is more uniform than that of the interior of continents. The climate of western Pampas is not so equable as it is on the coasts, where it is due to the proximity of the Atlantic. It changes incessantly, and the thermometer suddenly rises or falls. In autumn—during April and May—rains are frequent and heavy. But at that time of year the weather was very dry, and the temperature high.

All that day the plain stretched out before the travellers in all its unvarying monotony. About two o'clock they saw lying on the ground and under the sun's rays, a line of bones belonging to an innumerable herd of oxen. Some were heaped up together, and could not have belonged to animals who had dropped down from exhaustion.

Paganel asked Thalcave if he could explain their presence. He translated his answer, which was 'Fire from heaven.'

'How could lightning have caused such a disaster as that?' asked Tom Austin. 'There must have been a herd of five hundred killed here!'

Thalcave affirms it, Paganel replied 'and he does not make mistakes. I believe that storms in the Pampas are sometimes fearfully violent. I hope we shan't have any.'

'It's very warm,' Wilson pointed out.

'The thermometer,' Paganel agreed 'must mark seventy degrees in the shade.'

'I can feel electricity in the air,' said Glenarvan. 'It's to be hoped that this heat won't last.'

'We mustn't count upon a change in the weather,' Paganel reminded him, 'for there isn't a cloud in the sky.'

'So much the worse,' replied Glenarvan, 'for our horses are badly affected by the heat. You aren't too warm, are you, Robert?' he turned to the boy.

'No, my lord,' was the answer, 'I like the heat; it's good.'

'Especially in winter,' the major agreed, sending the smoke of his cigar tranquilly up to the sky.

In the evening they stopped near a deserted *rancho*, or cabin, made of twisted branches, and covered with thatch. It was half rotten, but was strong enough to protect the horses against the attack of foxes during the night. Not that they had anything to fear personally from the animals, but the foxes eat away the halters, and the horses take advantage of this to run away. A few steps away from the rancho a hole had served as a kitchen, and was filled with cinders. Within it there was a stool, a pot, a spit, and a kettle for making *mate*, a kind of Indian tea. This is an infusion of leaves dried by fire, and is sucked up through straws, like some American drinks. Paganel asked Thalcave to make them some to take with their ordinary food, and it was pronounced excellent.

The next day the weather was unbearably hot, and unfortunately there was not the least shelter. Yet they went courageously on with their journey, at intervals meeting immense flocks and herds, so over powered by the heat that they lacked the power to graze. Their only guardians were dogs, who are so accustomed to the flocks that, when overpowered by thirst, they suck the ewes' milk. Towards the middle of the day, the country began to change in aspect. Grasses became rare, and gave place to meagre burdocks and gigantic thistles, nine feet high, which would have made all the asses in the world happy. The carpet of grass had so far been thick and luxurious, but now they came to dry patches, which betrayed the poverty of the soil.

'I'm not sorry for the change,' said Tom Austin; 'you get positively sick of grass.'

'But you don't get sick of water, and where grass is, water is,' the major pointed out.

'Oh, we're not short of that yet, and we're certain to find some stream on our route,' Wilson reassured him.

If Paganel had heard this he would have been sure to say that watercourses were rare between the Colorado and the Argentine sierras; but just then he was explaining something that Glenarvan had just pointed out to him. For some time the air had seemed to be filled with a smell of smoke, which astonished all the travellers except Paganel and Thalcave.

'We can't see any fire,' said Paganel, 'but we can smell the smoke, and we know that there's no smoke without fire. There's a fire somewhere in the Pampas, but it may be seventy-five miles off.'

'Seventy-five miles?' the major repeated incredulously.

'Yes; the Pampas are so flat that burning grass is smelt that distance away.'

'What sets fire to the prairies?' asked Robert.

Sometimes lightning does, and sometimes the Indians do, on purpose.'

'What for?'

'They say, but I don't know upon what foundation, that the grasses grow better afterwards. For my own part, I believe it is to destroy the millions of parasites that trouble the cattle.'

'But such drastic means must kill the animals as well as the parasites?' said the major.

'Yes, it kills some of them, but there are such quantities of them that they're not missed.'

'Aren't travellers ever in danger from such fires?' asked Mac-Nabbs.

'I should be glad to have the chance of being in danger from them,' Paganel declared. 'What a glorious sight they must be!'

'So you would be burnt alive for the glory of science, Mr. Philosopher?' asked Glenarvan.

'No: I should clear away the grass in a circle, and then I could stand in the middle of it and watch the glorious sight.'

But Paganel's wishes were not destined to be realised, and if he were half roasted it was in the sun's rays. The horses could not go fast enough even to let the wind fan the travellers' faces, and there was no shade to be hoped for unless some clouds should veil the sky. Notwithstanding Wilson's prediction, water did fail. He had not counted upon the devouring thirst they all experienced, and they did not come across even one *rio*. Paganel asked Thalcave where he counted upon finding water.

'At Lake Salinas,' replied the Indian.

'And when shall we reach it?'

'Tomorrow evening.'

When they travel in the Pampas, the Argentinians usually dig wells and find water a few fathoms below the soil. But the travellers had no tools, and they had to ration themselves so that, although they were not actually suffering from thirst, none of them could completely slake it. In the evening, after a journey of thirty miles, they halted. They had all counted upon a good night after the day's fatigue, but it was troubled by swarms of mosquitoes. Their presence indicated a change in the wind, which, in fact, veered round north, for these troublesome insects usually disappear with the breeze from the south west.

The major was silent, even when tormented with these small pests, but Paganel, on the contrary, grew indignant with fate. Although MacNabbs tried to console him by saying he ought to be happy at not having the whole three hundred thousand species of insects to deal with instead of only one, the geographer awoke in a very bad temper.

They set out again at daybreak, for they wanted to reach Lake Salinas that day. The horses were very tired; they were dying of thirst, and, although their riders had deprived themselves so that the animals might have more, their ration of water had been very small. During that day the monotony of the journey was interrupted; Mulrady, who was riding on in front, retraced his steps and announced the approach of a group of Indians. Glenarvan would not have been sorry, as they might have been able to give him some information about Captain Grant; but Thalcove thought it better to avoid them, as the wandering tribes of the prairies were usually robbers. By his orders the little troop made ready their rifles to be prepared for anything.

The Indians came within one hundred paces, and were only ten in number, which reassured the Patagonian. They were natives, belonging to the Pampean race; their high forehead, round and not sloping backward, their tall stature, their olive colour, made them the finest types of Indian. They were clothed in skins, and each carried a lance twenty feet long, knives, bolas, and a lasso. They were splendid horsemen.

They stopped when they were a hundred feet away, and Glenarvan went towards them, but he had not gone far before they all faced about and disappeared with incredible speed.

'The cowards!' cried Paganel.

'They run away too quickly to be honest people,' said Mac Nabbs

'Who are those Indians?' Paganel asked Thalcave

'Gauchos,' answered the Patagonian

'Then,' Paganel turned to his companions 'we needn't have taken so many precautions'

'Why not?' asked the major

'Because the Gauchos are most honest peasants who took us for robbers and run away'

I don't believe it' protested the major, 'they look just like bandits and even Thalcave was frightened at them'

Then Thalcave was wrong for once. Paganel was getting rather angry. The Gauchos are agriculturists, sheepbreeders and nothing else. I have written a pamphlet on the natives of the Pampas that was well received so I ought to know.

You'll have to make some errata in the next edition' Mac Nabbs teased him

Paganel was beginning to lose his temper

'You are not very polite today, major,' he said

'And you're not in a very good humour.' Mac Nabbs retorted

The Patagonian looked at these two men who were getting angry over such a trifle and although he did not understand what they were quarrelling about he smiled and explained calmly

'It's the north wind'

'What's the north wind got to do with it?' snapped Paganel

'He means that it's the cause of your bad temper,' Glenarvan explained. 'I've heard that it is especially irritating to the nervous system in South America.'

'By Saint Patrick! Edward, you're quite right!' the major laughed heartily.

But Paganel had now got really angry and asked 'Do you mean to say my nervous system is irritated by lord?'

'Yes, Paganel, it's the north wind that causes as many crimes in the Pampas as the tramontane in the Roman campagna.'

'Crimes!' cried the savant. 'Do I look like a man who'd commit a crime?'

'I didn't say that.'

'You'll say next that I want to assassinate you next.'

'I'm afraid you may,' Glenarvan laughed till he could hardly contain himself. 'Fortunately, the north wind lasts only one day!'

Every one joined in with Glenarvan, and the irritated geographer went on ahead to recover his temper: in a quarter of an hour he had forgotten all about it. At eight they reached the banks of the Salinas, but there a great disappointment awaited them. The lake was dry.

CHAPTER XVIII

LOOKING FOR WATER

EXPEDITIONS USED formerly to come from Buenos Ayres to Lake Salinas to get salt, its waters containing much chloride of sodium. But the ardent sun had dried up the water, and left only an immense shining mirror in the bed of the lake. Thalcave had counted upon getting drinking water from the rios of fresh water that run into the lake, but these also had dried up.

When the thirsty travellers saw this, their consternation was great: the little water still remaining in their leather bottles was half-tainted, and unfit to drink. Fatigue and hunger were nothing in comparison to this. A *roukah*, or leather tent, deserted by the natives, served as a shelter for the men, while the horses ate with repugnance the marine plants and dried-up reeds. When they had all settled down, Paganel asked Thalcave what must be done next. Glenarvan understood something of the answer, and asked—

‘He tells us we must separate, doesn’t he?’

‘Yes, into two troops,’ Paganel answered. ‘Some of the horses are quite worn out, they can scarcely put one foot before the other, and they must go on along the thirty-seventh parallel as well as they can. Those that are not so fatigued must go on in front, as far as the Guamini river, that flows into Lake Lucas thirty-one miles from here. If there’s enough water there, they must wait for their companions on the banks of the Guamini. If there isn’t any water, they’ll come back and meet them, to save them a useless journey.’

‘What are we to do then?’ asked Tom Austin.

‘We should have to go down south for seventy-five miles, as far as the beginning of the Sierra Ventana, where rivers are numerous.’

‘Thalcave’s advice is good, and we must follow it at once. My horse is in pretty good condition, and I’ll accompany Thalcave.’

‘Oh, my lord, take me, too,’ Robert spoke, as though a pleasure trip were in question.

‘But can you keep up with us, my boy?’

'Yes, I've a good horse, and I do so want to go on with you. May I?'

'Very well, my boy.' Glenarvan was delighted at not having to be separated from Robert. 'We three will go in search of water.'

'Then what am I to do?' asked Paganel.

'Oh, you, my dear Paganel, you must remain with the reserve,' the major told him. 'You know the thirtyseventh parallel, and the river Guamini, and the entire Pampas too well for you to leave us. Neither Mulrady, nor Wilson nor I can possibly rejoin Thalcave, unless we march under your banner.'

'I must resign myself, then,' the geographer felt much flattered.

'But no absence of mind, remember,' added the major. 'Don't lead us back to the Pacific instead of on to the Atlantic.'

'You deserve that I should, Major Insupportable,' laughed Paganel. 'But, Glenarvan, how shall you understand what Thalcave says?'

'I don't suppose we shall want to carry on much conversation,' answered Glenarvan. 'Besides, I can use the few Spanish words I know if anything urgent happens.'

'Go on, then, and succeed,' replied Paganel.

'We'll have supper first, and sleep till it's time to start—if we can,' Glenarvan replied.

They supped without drinking, and slept as well as thirsty souls can. Paganel dreamt of torrents, cascades, rivers, streams, and even full decanters. He had a nightmare of water on the brain.

Next morning, at six, the horses of Thalcave, Glenarvan and Robert Grant were saddled; they were given their last ration of water, which they drank more from want than from satisfaction, for it was very nauseous.

'Goodbye,' the major and his companions chorused.

'And mind you don't come back,' added Paganel.

The Deserto de las Salinas, which the three had to cross, is a clayey plain, covered with stumpy trees about ten feet high, and the little mimosas that the Indians call *cura-mammel* and *jumes*, very rich in soda. Here and there large sheets of salt reflected the solar rays with astonishing intensity; they looked like sheets of ice, and the contrast between them and the barren and dried-up soil was striking in the extreme.

The three horses galloped on as fast as they could, seeming to know instinctively why their masters were urging them. Thaouka seemed as fresh as on the first day, and the two other horses,

spurred on by his example, followed him courageously. Thalcave, motionless in his saddle, gave his companions the example that Thaouka gave his, and often turned his head to look at Robert Grant. On seeing the young boy firmly seated in the saddle, and behaving like an accomplished horseman, he expressed his satisfaction by an exclamation of encouragement.

'Bravo, Robert!' said Glenarvan. 'Thalcave is complimenting you, my boy.'

'What about, my lord?'

'About the way you ride. You'll make a good rider soon.'

'But father says I'm to be a good sailor.'

'One doesn't interfere with the other. If all good horsemen don't make good sailors, all sailors can make good horsemen.'

'Poor father,' exclaimed Robert; 'how he will thank you for saving him!'

'You're very fond of him, then, Robert?'

'Yes, my lord. He was so kind to Mary and me. He only thought of us. He used to bring us back something from every country he went to. Mary is like him; he has a soft voice like hers. That's queer for a sailor, isn't it, Sir?'

'Yes, very strange, Robert,' answered Glenarvan.

'I remember him so well,' the boy continued, as if speaking to himself. 'When I was quite little I used to go to sleep in his arms while he sang to me. I think you must be little to love your father so very much.'

'And big to venerate him, my child,' Glenarvan answered.

During this conversation the horses had fallen into a walk.

'We shall find him, shan't we?' said Robert, after some moments' silence.

'Yes, we shall find him,' Glenarvan assured him. 'Thalcave has put us on his track, and I have every confidence in him.'

The conversation was here interrupted by Thalcave, who signed to them not to lag behind. They went on faster, but it was soon clear that, Thaouka excepted, the horses could not keep it up long. At noon they had to give them an hour's rest; the beasts were quite worn out, and refused to eat the meagre tufts of dried-up grass.

Glenarvan was getting uneasy. The signs of drought increased, and the lack of water might have disastrous consequences. Thalcave said nothing, and thought probably that, if the Guamini were dried up, it would then be time to despair, if ever an Indian can do that.

'They set out again, and by help of whip and spur the horses kept on, but only at a walking pace; they could do no more. Thalcave could easily have gone on in front, for Thaouka would have carried him to the banks of the river in a few hours. No doubt he thought of this, but he would not leave his two companions alone in the midst of the desert; and so as not to get on before them he made his steed take a more moderate pace. This was difficult, and Thalcave controlled him only with words: he talked to his horse; and if Thaouka did not answer him, he nevertheless understood him. The intelligent animal soon assured him that water was not far off, for he was sniffing the increasing dampness of the air with delight. The two other horses felt that Thaouka's superior perception would not deceive them, and they all galloped on quicker.

About three a white line appeared in a bend of the road; it was quivering in the sunlight. There was no need to spur on their horses: the poor animals felt their strength revive, rushed towards the river, and plunged in up to their breasts. They carried their masters with them, and the thirsty men hung over their saddles, dipped their faces into the beneficent stream, and drank like their animals.

'Oh, how nice it is!' exclaimed Robert.

'Be moderate, my boy,' answered Glenarvan, but he did not preach by example.

As for Thalcave, he was in no hurry, but drank quietly in long sips, as though he would never leave off.

'Our companions will find plenty of water when they do reach the Guamini,' said Glenarvan. 'That is, if Thalcave doesn't drink it all.'

'Couldn't we go and meet them?' asked Robert. 'We should save them a great deal of anxiety and suffering.'

'Yes, my boy, but how could we carry any water? Wilson has the leather bottles. No, it will be better to wait, as we agreed. Even if their horses only walk, they must reach here during the night. We must prepare a good shelter and a good meal.'

Thalcave had not waited for Glenarvan's suggestion to look for a good place to encamp in. He had been lucky enough to find, on the banks of the rio, a *ramada*, or enclosure for flocks, closed in on three sides. They would have to sleep in the open air, but they cared little about that, and they lay down in the sun to dry their soaking garments.

'Now we've got shelter, we must think about supper,' said

Glenarvan. 'What do you say to taking our guns and seeing what we can bag, Robert?'

The boy followed Glenarvan eagerly. The banks of the Guamini seemed to be the general meeting-place for all the game in the neighbourhood, and soon there rose before the sportsmen hundreds of deer and guanacos, like those that had assailed them so violently on the Cordilleras; but these animals were so fleet that it was impossible to approach them. But they made up for this with game less fleet but which left nothing to be desired as food, and in less than half-an-hour they had bagged all they needed.

Robert killed an armadillo, covered with a jointed and bony carapace, a foot and a half long. It was very fat, and when the Patagonian said it would make an excellent dish, the boy was very proud of his success. Thalcave gave his companions the spectacle of a *nandou* hunt; this is a species of ostrich restricted to the Pampas and its speed is marvellous. The Indian set Thaouka straight at the bird, and, while some distance off, he threw his bolas so dexterously that it caught it in the legs and threw it to the ground. Its flesh is considered a great delicacy, and Thalcave had not killed it merely for sport; he skinned it, and cut the flesh into thin slices.

The three travellers prepared some of the smaller pieces for their supper, leaving plenty for their companions. The water of the rio seemed to them more delicious than all the port in the world, or even the famous usquebaugh, so honoured in the Scottish Highlands. Not had the horses been forgotten. A store of hay they had found in the ramada served them at once for supper and for bed.

Then Glenarvan, Robert, and the Indian wrapped themselves up in their ponchos, lay down on a bed of dried grass, and were soon fast asleep.

CHAPTER XIX

THE RED WOLVES

THERE WAS a new moon that night, and the vague light of the stars was all that pierced the darkness. On the horizon the zodiacal constellations were obscured in the mist. The waters of the Guamini ran without a murmur, like a stream of oil gliding over a marble surface. Birds, quadrupeds, and reptiles rested after the fatigues of the day, and the silence of the desert extended over the immense Pampas.

Men and horses slept profoundly. The horses ridden by Glenarvan and Robert lay down, but Thaouka, like a true thoroughbred, slept standing, as proud in repose as in action, ready to spring ahead at the least sign from his master. A complete calm reigned in the enclosure, and the cinders of the fire went out little by little, throwing their last glimmers into the darkness.

At about ten, after a short sleep, the Indian awoke. His eyes stared under his lowering eyebrows; he turned his ear towards the plain. He was plainly trying to catch some imperceptible sound.

Soon a vague uneasiness appeared on his usually impassive face. Did he feel the approach of some wandering Indians, or the wild animals that infest the banks of rivers? No doubt he thought of the combustible materials piled up in the enclosure, and then his anxiety grew greater still, for there was not enough to keep any daring animals off so long.

Then all he could do was to wait; and he waited in a half-lying posture, with his head in his hands and his elbows on his knees, like a man whom a sudden alarm has aroused from slumber. An hour passed thus, and anyone but he would have been reassured by the silence, and have lain down again to sleep. But where a stranger would have suspected nothing, the Indian's natural instinct foresaw approaching danger. Whilst he was listening and watching, he heard Thaouka neigh uneasily, and stretch his nostrils towards the entrance. The Patagonian got up at once.

'Thaouka smells some enemy,' he decided.

He went out and carefully scrutinised the plain. He thought he could see some shadows moving noiselessly amongst the tufts

of prairie grass: here and there shone luminous points, going in and out, and moving in all directions. They looked like glow-worms, but Thalcave knew what enemies he had to deal with; he loaded his rifle, and took up a position near the first stakes of the inclosure. He had not long to wait. A strange cry, a mixture of a barking and howling could be heard. The report of the rifle answered it, and was followed by a fearful clamour.

Glenarvan and Robert, suddenly awoken, got up.

'What is it?' asked young Grant.

'Are the Indians upon us?' said Glenarvan.

'No, aguaras, Thalcave explained.'

'What are aguaras?' asked Robert, looking at Glenarvan.

'The red wolves of the Pampas.'

They seized their arms and joined the Indian, who pointed towards the plain, whence could be heard a formidable concert of howling. Robert drew back involuntarily.

'You aren't afraid of wolves, my boy?' Glenarvan asked him.

'No, my lord,' Robert told him firmly. 'I'm not afraid of anything so long as I'm with you.'

'These aguaras aren't very formidable; I don't care if there aren't too many of them.'

Glenarvan said this to reassure the child; but he could not think without a secret terror of the legion of carnivorous animals loose in the night. Perhaps they were there by hundreds, and three men, however well armed, could not struggle against such a number of animals.

The red wolf, called *canis jubatus* by the naturalists, is the size of a large dog, and has a fox's head; its coat is cinnamon colour, and a long black mane runs all along its spine. It is very nimble and vigorous; it generally inhabits marshy places, and swims after the aquatic animals; it sleeps during the day, and hunts at night, it is much dreaded in the enclosures where flocks are raised, for when hungry it attacks large cattle, and commits considerable ravages.

Single, the aguara is not formidable, but it is different when there are a large number of famished animals, and it would be better to have a jaguar to deal with face to face. Now, by the multitude of shadows and the deafening howls, Glenarvan could not be mistaken about the number assembled on the banks of the Guamini; they had smelt out a certain prey, horseflesh or human flesh, and none of them meant to go back to their lair without a share. So the situation was very alarming.

The circle of wolves grew smaller and smaller, and the awakened horses showed signs of the greatest terror. Thaouka alone struck the ground with his hoofs, tried to break his halter, ready to fly outside. His master succeeded in calming him only by keeping up a constant whistling.

Glenarvan and Robert had taken their places to defend the entrance to the ramada. Their rifles were loaded, and they were going to fire on the front rank of the aguaras, when Thalcave put his hand on their arms as they were taking aim.

'What does Thalcave mean?' asked Robert.

'He's forbidding us to fire,' answered Glenarvan.

'Why?'

'Perhaps he doesn't think this is the right moment.'

It was not this motive that caused the Indian to act in that way, but a grave reason. This Glenarvan soon understood, when Thalcave opened his cartridge case and showed that it was nearly empty.

'What is it?' asked Robert.

'He means that we must be careful of our cartridges. We have only about twenty shots left; we used so many for our game to-day.'

The boy did not answer.

'You're not afraid, Robert?'

'No, my lord.'

'That's right, my boy.'

At that moment a shot was heard. Thalcave had brought down a too daring enemy; the wolves, who were advancing in close ranks, recoiled and stopped in a mass at a hundred paces away. Then Glenarvan, at a sign from the Indian, took his place, while he made a heap of dried grass they had been lying on, and of all the combustible materials within reach, and stacked it up at the entrance to the ramada; he threw a burning ember upon it. Soon a curtain of flame spread itself over the dark background of the sky, and across it the plain appeared lit brightly up.

Glenarvan could then judge of the innumerable quantity of animals he had to face: so many wolves had never been seen together before, and they were as eager as they were numerous. The barrier of fire which Thalcave had just opposed them had redoubled their fury by stopping them short. Some even advanced into the flame, pushed on by the outer ranks, and they howled in agony as it burnt their paws.

From time to time another shot was necessary to stop the howl-

ing band, and in an hour's time fifteen lay dead on the prarie. The besieged were then in a relatively less dangerous position; as long as their powder and shot lasted, and the barrier of fire could be kept up, the invasion was not dangerous. But what were they to do when all means of repelling the wolves should fail?

Glenarvan looked at Robert, and felt his heart sink. He forgot himself, and thought only of the poor child, who was showing a courage above his years. The boy was pale, but his hand was firm upon his rifle as he waited for the assault of the angry wolves. Glenarvan decided to end their dangerous situation.

'In an hour,' said he, 'we shall have neither powder, shot, nor fire left. We mustn't wait till then.'

He turned to Thalcave, and with all the Spanish he could muster, began a conversation with the Indian, often interrupted by rifle shots. It was not without difficulty that the two men succeeded in understanding one another, but Glenarvan understood the habits of the red wolves, or he could not have interpreted the words and gestures of the Patagonian. Nevertheless, a quarter of an hour passed before he could tell Robert the Indian's answer.

'What does he say?' the child asked.

'He says that, whatever it costs, we must wait till daybreak. The aguara seeks prey only at night, and when morning comes it retreats to its lair. It is the wolf of darkness, a cowardly animal that is afraid of daylight, an owl on four legs.'

'Well, we must defend ourselves till daybreak.'

'Yes, my boy, and we must use our knives when we can no longer use our guns.'

Thalcave had already given the example, and when a wolf approached the fire the long arm of the Patagonian crossed the flame and came back covered with blood. Soon, however, all means of defence began to fail. Thalcave threw the last armful of fuel into the flame, and there remained only five shots.

Glenarvan looked round him sadly. He thought of the child, of his companions, of all those whom he loved. Robert said nothing. Perhaps the danger did not seem so imminent to his trustful imagination. But Glenarvan was anxious for him, and thought over the horrible and inevitable prospect of being devoured alive! As he grasped the boy's hand, tears came into his eyes. Robert smiled.

'I'm not afraid!' he declared.

'No, my boy, no,' answered Glenarvan, 'and you're right. In two hours it will be daylight, and we'll be safe; Well done, Thal-

cave, well done!' he cried as the Indian killed two enormous animals with a blow from the butt of his gun as they were trying to leap the fiery barrier.

But at that moment the dying flames of the fire showed him the pack of aguaras advancing in close ranks to assault the ramada. The end of the sanguinary drama was approaching; the fire was dying out gradually for want of fuel; the plain which it had lit up once more became dark, while the phosphorescent eyes of the red wolves shone out again. In a few moments all the pack would be in the enclosure. Thalcave fired his rifle for the last time, brought down another enemy; then his ammunition exhausted, he crossed his arms. His head fell upon his breast, and he seemed to be silently meditating. Was he thinking out some bold or mad attempt to repulse the furious troop? Glenarvan dared not ask him.

At that moment the wolves changed their plan of attack. They seemed to be going farther away and then howlings, so deafening hitherto, suddenly ceased.

'They're going away!' said Robert.

'Perhaps,' Glenarvan was listening to the noise outside.

But Thalcave guessed his thoughts and shook his head. He knew very well that the animals would not abandon a certain prey until daybreak sent them back to their dark lairs. Still, it was certain that they had changed their tactics. They were no longer trying to force an entrance into the ramada, but their flesh manoeuvres were more dangerous still. They had run round the ramada, and with a common accord they were making an attack on the opposite side. Their paws were soon heard breaking through the rotten wood, and their heads were already peeping between the stakes. The frightened horses broke their halters, and ran about the enclosure mad with terror. Glenarvan seized the boy to defend him to the last. Perhaps he meant to attempt an impossible flight, when his glance fell upon the Indian.

Thalcave was carefully saddling his impatient horse, and did not seem to be troubling himself about the howlings that had broken out again with fury. Glenarvan looked at him.

'He's going to abandon us!' he cried seeing the Indian take the reins in his hand ready to jump into the saddle.

'He wouldn't do such a thing!' said Robert. Thaouka was ready; his eyes, full of fire, threw lightning flashes, he had understood his master. As the Indian was springing into the saddle, Glenarvan grasped his hand convulsively.

'Are you going?' he pointed to the plain.

'Yes,' the Indian understood his companion's gesture. Then he added several Spanish words, which signified—'Thaouka! Good horse! Wolves will run after him!'

'Oh, Thalcave!' cried Glenarvan.

'Quick! quick!' answered the Indian, whilst Glenarvan said, in a voice broken by emotion—

'Robert, my child, you heard him. He wants to be devoured for us. He wants to draw the wolves after himself, away from us.'

'Oh, Thalcave, don't leave us!' cried Robert, throwing himself at the Patagonian's feet.

'No,' said Glenarvan, 'he shan't leave us.' Then turning towards the Indian, he said, 'Let's go together,' and pointed towards the terrified horses rubbing themselves against the stakes.

'No, said the Indian, who understood what Glenarvan meant. 'Stupid animals! Frightened! I must go!' Then seizing Thaouka's collar, again he tried to jump on, but Glenarvan took hold of him and said, 'I shall go. Save the child. I trust him to you.'

Glenarvan mixed up Spanish and English in his excitement, but in so terrible a situation gestures say all, and men understand each other quickly. However, Thalcave resisted. The dispute continued, and the danger grew greater at every second, for the stakes were giving way.

The Indian had dragged Glenarvan to the entrance of the enclosure, and showed him that the plain was free of wolves; in his animated language, he explained that there was not a moment to be lost, that the danger would be greater for those who remained if the manoeuvre did not succeed, that he alone knew his horse's marvellous capacity of speed. Glenarvan was obstinate, but suddenly he was thrown down. Thaouka had sprung forward, clearing the fiery barrier and the bodies of the wolves, whilst a boyish voice cried—

'God will save you, my lord!'

Glenarvan and Thalcave scarcely had time to perceive Robert clinging to Thaouka's mane and disappearing into the darkness.

'Robert! Robert!' cried Glenarvan. But not even the Indian could hear him for a fearful howling drowned his word. The red wolves had rushed after the horse with frightful speed.

Thalcave and Glenarvan dashed out of the ramada. The plain had already recovered its calm, and all they could see was an undulating line moving in the distant darkness. Glenarvan clasped

his hands in despair, and looked at the Indian. Thalcave smiled with his accustomed calm.

'Thaouka! Good horse! Brave boy! He will escape!' he replied.

'But if he falls off?' said Glenarvan

'He will not fall off.'

Notwithstanding Thalcave's confidence, Lord Glenarvan passed the rest of the night in terrible anguish. He no longer thought of the danger that had vanished with the pack of wolves. He wanted to rush after Robert, but the Indian stopped him, and made him understand that their horses could not catch up with Thaouka, who would outdistance his enemies, that they could not see him in the darkness, and that they must wait till daylight.

At four, the dawn began to break. The mists condensed on the horizon appeared in faint colours. A limpid dew spread over the plain, and the tall grass bent under the first breezes of dawn. The time for departure had come, and, at a signal from the Indian, Glenarvan sprang upon Robert's horse. The two horsemen were soon galloping westward, looking all round them for Robert, and fearing to find his mutilated corpse, while Glenarvan tore at his horse's flanks with his spurs. At last several shots were heard at equal distances, like signals to friends.

'It's them!' cried Glenarvan.

Thalcave and he made their horses gallop faster still, and a few minutes later they rejoined the detachment led by Paganel. Glenarvan gave a shout, Robert was there, alive and well, carried by the superb Thaouka, who neighed with pleasure on again seeing his master.

'My boy! my boy!' There was indescribable tenderness in Glenarvan's tone.

He took Robert in his arms, whence the child was passed into those of Thalcave, who pressed Captain Grant's courageous son to his breast.

'Still alive! Still alive!' shouted Glenarvan.

'Yes,' Robert answered, 'and thanks to Thaouka!'

The Indian had not waited for their gratitude to thank his horse, and already he was talking to him, and kissing him, as if human blood were flowing in the proud animal's veins. Turning towards Paganel, he pointed to Robert, and said: 'A brave!' Then employing the Indian metaphor as to express courage, he added, 'His spurs have not trembled!'

But Glenarvan asked Robert, 'Why, my son, why didn't you let Thalcave or me try that last chance of saving you?'

'My lord,' answered the child, in tones of the most lively gratitude, 'wasn't it my place to sacrifice myself? Thalcave had already saved my life! And you were going to save my father's'

CHAPTER XX

THE ARGENTINE PLAINS

AFTER THE first greetings were over, Paganel, Austin, Wilson, Mulrady, all who had remained behind, excepting, perhaps, Major MacNabbs, realised that they were dying of thirst. Fortunately, the Guamini was flowing only a short distance away, so they set out again, and by seven they had arrived in safety at the enclosure. The ravages made by the wolves showed the violence of the attack, and the vigour of the defence. Soon the travellers, abundantly refreshed, ate a phenomenal breakfast inside the ramada. The nandou slices were declared excellent.

'It would be ungrateful to Providence not to eat too much,' said Paganel.

And he did eat too much, and was none the worse for it, thanks to the limpid water of the Guamini, which appeared to have superior digestive qualities.

At ten Glenarvan, not wanting to make Hannibal's mistake at Capua, gave the signal to set out. The leather bottles were filled with water, and they started; the horses were thoroughly refreshed, and kept up a gallop.

The country became damper and more fertile, but was still deserted. Nothing happened on the 2nd or 3rd November, and in the evening the travellers, already worn out with the fatigue of their long journey, encamped . the end of the Pampas, on the frontiers of Buenos Ayres province. They had left Talcahuano Bay on 14th October; they had been twenty-two days coming 450 miles—two-thirds of their journey.

Next day they passed the conventional line that separates the Argentine Plains from the Pampas region. It was there that Thalcave hoped to meet the caciques, in whose hands he had no doubt of finding Captain Grant and his two companions.

Of the fourteen provinces that compose the Argentine Republic, that of Buenos Ayres is both the largest and the most thickly populated. Its soil is wonderfully fertile. A particularly salubrious climate reigns over this plain, covered with grass and shrubs, which is almost perfectly level to the foot of the mountains.

Since they had left the Guamini, the travellers felt, not with-

out much satisfaction, a wonderful amelioration in the temperature. The average did not exceed fifty-five degrees Fahrenheit, owing to the cold violent winds of Patagonia, which incessantly troubled the air. Neither animals nor people had any reason to complain, after having suffered so much from heat and drought, and they advanced with ardour and confidence. But, notwithstanding what Thalcave had said of it, the country appeared to be completely uninhabited.

On the east were many little lagunes, formed sometimes of fresh, sometimes of brackish water. Upon their shores, and under the shelter of the bushes, tiny wrens sang their joyous songs, along with the tangeras, the rainbow hued humming birds. These beautiful birds gaily flapped their wings without taking any notice of the military looking starlings, who paraded upon the banks. Upon the thorny bushes swung a West Indian's hammock, the nests of the annubis, and magnificent flamingos marched in an orderly troop, spreading out to the wind their flame coloured wings. Their nests were to be seen in millions, as cones, with their tops cut off, and about a foot high, forming a small town. The flamingos did not disturb themselves at the approach of the travellers, and this was not what Paganel wished.

'For a long time,' he told the major, 'I've been curious to see a flamingo fly, and I shall profit by the occasion.'

So letting his companions go on in front, and followed by Robert Grant and the major, he went towards the flock.

Then he fired a blank cartridge, for he would not kill a bird needlessly; the flamingos flew up with one accord, whilst Paganel watched them attentively through his spectacles.

'Well,' he asked the major, when the flock had disappeared, 'did you see them fly?'

'Yes, certainly,' answered MacNabbs.

'Well, did you think they looked like feathered arrows, whilst they were flying?'

'Not the least in the world.'

'Not at all,' added Robert.

'I was sure of it,' replied the savant, with an air of satisfaction. 'That did not keep the proudest of modest people, my illustrious countryman, Chateaubriand, from making that inexact comparison between flamingos and arrows! Ah, Robert, beware of comparison! It's the most dangerous figure of rhetoric that I know of. Never use it till the last extremity.'

'Are you satisfied with your experiment?' asked the major.

'Enchanted!'

'Then so am I, and now we must make haste, for your illustrious Chateaubriand has kept us a mile behind.'

When he had rejoined his companions, Paganel found Glenarvan in conversation with the Indian, whom he did not seem to understand. Thalcave often stopped to look at the horizon, and every time he did so his face expressed the strongest astonishment. For lack of an interpreter, Glenarvan had tried in vain to question the Indian. Directly he caught sight of the savant he shouted: 'Make haste and come here, Paganel. Thalcave and I can't understand each other.'

Paganel talked for some minutes with the Patagonian, then he turned to Glenarvan: 'Thalcave is astonished at a fact which really is surprising.'

'What is that?'

'He cannot understand why we find neither Indians, nor any sign of them, on plains that are usually covered with them leading their cattle to the estancias, or going to the Andes to sell their corillo carpets and their painted leather whips.'

'And how does Thalcave explain their absence?'

'He doesn't know, and it astonishes him.'

'But what Indians did he expect to find in this part of the Pampas?'

'Precisely those who had captured the foreign prisoners.'

'Who are they?'

'Chiefs of tribes who were all powerful thirty years ago, before they were driven beyond the sierras. Since that time they have been subjugated as much as any Indians can be subjugated, and they wander over the Pampas and the Buenos Ayres province. I'm as astonished as Thalcave not to see any traces of them in the country where they ply the trade of *salteadores* (pillagers).'

'But then, what are we to do?' asked Glenarvan.

'I'll ask Thalcave,' and after a short conversation with him Paganel explained: 'This is what he advises, and it seems very wise. We must push on as far as Fort Independence—it's on our road—and there, if we don't get any news of Captain Grant, we'll at least know what has become of the Indians.'

'Is Fort Independence far off?' asked Glenarvan.

'No; it's in the Sierra Tandil, sixty miles from here.'

'When shall we get there?'

'The day after tomorrow.'

Glenarvan was disquieted by this incident. Not to find Indians

in the Pampas was the thing he had least expected: there are generally too many. Something special must have driven them away. If Captain Grant were a prisoner of one of these tribes, had he been dragged north or south? There doubts troubled him. At all events, the best thing to do was to follow Thalcave's advice and reach Tandil. There at least they would find some one to ask.

Towards four, a hill that might pass for a mountain in so flat a country appeared on the horizon. It was the *Sierra Tapalguem*, at whose foot the travellers encamped the following night.

This sierra was crossed next day quite easily across a series of easy slopes. Such a sierra was nothing to men who had crossed the Cordilleras, and the horses scarcely slackened speed. At noon they passed the deserted fortress of Tapalquem, the first in the chain of forts erected along the southern boundary against the pillaging Indians.

But to the increasing astonishment of Thalcave, not the shadow of an Indian was to be seen. However, towards the middle of the day, three horsemen, well mounted and well armed, stared for an instant at the little troop; but they would not let themselves be approached, and they fled away with incredible speed. Glenarvan was furious.

'Gauchos,' the Patagonian gave these natives the name which had led to the dispute between the major and Paganel.

'Ah! Gauchos are they?' answered MacNabbs.

'Well, Paganel, the north wind isn't blowing today. What do you think of those animals?'

'I think they look like famous bandits,' answered Paganel.

'And what is the difference between looking and being, Mr. Geographer?'

'There is none, Mr. Major.'

Paganel's acknowledgment was followed by a general laugh, which did not disconcert him, and he made a strange remark about these Indians.

'I have read somewhere,' he said; 'that the mouth of Arabs has a rare expression of ferocity, though their eyes are benevolent. Well, in the American savage, it is just the contrary. The eyes of those fellows are cruel.'

A professional physiognomist would not have better described the Indians.

However, following Thalcave's orders, they marched in a close group, for notwithstanding the apparent desertion of the coun-

try, they had to guard against being surprised; but the precaution was needless, and the same evening they encamped in a vast deserted tolderia, where the *caciques* generally assembled their tribes. The Patagonian saw, by the appearance of the ground, that it had not been occupied for a long time.

Next day Glenarvan and his companions were once more in the plain. The first *estancias*, as the enclosures for raising cattle are called, were seen in the neighbourhood of the Sierra Tandil; but Thalcave decided not to stop there, but to march straight on to Fort Independence, where he wanted to get information about this strangely desolated country.

Trees, so rare since the Cordilleras, then reappeared, most of them having been planted since the Europeans had reached America: poplars, willows, acacias, and peach trees, all growing well. They generally surrounded the *corrales*, or vast cattle enclosures built of stakes. There, thousands of oxen, sheep, cows, and horses were pasturing; they were branded with their owners' emblem by a hot iron, and guarded by large watch dogs. The rather saline soil which extends at the feet of these mountains is admirably suited for cattle, and makes excellent pasturage, so it is chosen for the *estancias*, which are directed by an overseer and a foreman, with four peons for every thousand head.

These people lead the life of the great shepherds of the Bible; their flocks are as numerous as or perhaps more numerous than those that filled the plains of Mesopotamia; but here the shepherds have no families, and the great '*estancieros*' of the Pampa are like rough cattle-drivers, resembling in nothing the Biblical patriarchs. This Paganel explained well to his companions, and he embarked upon an anthropological discussion on the comparison of races. Even the major was interested.

Paganel had pointed out a curious effect of the mirage very common in these horizontal plains; the *estancias* in the distance look like large islands; the poplars and willows on their edges seem to be reflected in limpid water, and the illusion is so perfect that the eye cannot get used to it.

During that day, 6th November, they met with several *estancias*, and one or two *saladeros*. It is there that the cattle, after having been fattened on the succulent pasturage, are killed by the butchers. The *saladero*, as its name indicates, is the place where the meat is salted, and it is at the end of spring that this repugnant work is begun.

The *saladeros* go and fetch the animals from the *corrales*; they

catch them with the lasso, which they are very skilful in throwing, and lead them to the saladero, where oxen, bulls, cows, and sheep are killed by hundreds, skinned, and cut up. But the bulls often make a desperate resistance, so that the butcher is transformed into the toreador, and he does his perilous work with uncommon skill and, it must be said, ferocity. This butchery presented a horrible spectacle. Nothing is more repulsive than the neighbourhood of a saladero; from these horrible enclosures escape, with an atmosphere loaded with foetid emanations, the ferocious cries of the butchers, the barkings of dogs, the howl of dying animals, whilst the urubus and the auras, great vultures of the plain, come by thousands from twenty leagues round, and dispute with the butchers for the still palpitating remains of their victims.

But at this moment the saladeros were quiet and empty: the hour of slaughter had not yet struck. Thalcave hurried on; he wanted to arrive that same evening at Fort Independence; the horses, excited by their masters, and following Thaouka's example, galloped across the high prairie grass. They passed several farms, strongly fortified, and surrounded by deep ditches; round the principal house is a terrace, from whose top the inhabitants can fire upon the pillagers of the plain.

Glenarvan could, perhaps, have got the information there that he wanted, but the most certain way was to get to Tandil. They did not stop, but forded the Río de los Huesos, and a few miles further on the Chapaleofú. Soon the Sierra Tandil spread its first grassy slopes under the horses' feet, and an hour later the village appeared at the end of a narrow gorge, overlooked by the embattled walls of Fort Independence.

FORT INDEPENDENCE

THE SIERRA Tandil is 1,000 feet above sea level, and consists of a semi-circular succession of grass clad hills. The district to which it has given its name includes the southern part of the Buenos Ayres province, and towards the north it forms a slope, down which flow the rios nam'd after it.

This district contains about 21,000 inhabitants, and Tandil village, situated at the foot of the northern ridge of the sierra, on the important stream, the Chapalcofu, lies under the protection of Fort Independence. This village is peopled by French Basques and Italian colonists; it was, in fact, France that founded the first foreign settlements in the lower part of La Plata and in 1828 Fort Independence, meant to protect the country against the repeated invasions of the Indians, was raised by the French Parachappe. A savant of the first order joined in this enterprise; it was Alcide d'Orbigny, who has studied and described all the southern countries of South America.

This village is rather important. With its *galerias*, large ox-drawn carts constructed specially for the routes on the plain, it communicates with Buenos Ayres in twelve days, and carries on a fairly active commerce; it sends the town cattle from its estancias, salt meat from its saladeros, and some very curious productions of Indian workmanship cotton and woolen tissues, the much sought leather work, and so forth. It includes not only some fairly comfortable houses, but schools and churches for instruction in the things of this world and of the next.

Paganel, when giving these details, added that they would be sure to obtain information at Tandil; the fort is always occupied by a detachment of national troops. So Glenarvan had the horses put up in the stable of a *son'a* of tolerable appearance, then Paganel, the major, Robert, and he, under the guidance of Thalcave, made their way to Fort Indendence

After a climb of some minutes, they reached a postern door, rather carelessly guarded by an Argentinian sentinel. They entered without difficulty, either because of great negligence or of an extreme sense of security.

Some soldiers were being drilled on the fortress square; but the oldest of them was only twenty, and the youngest scarcely seven—about a dozen children. Their uniform consisted of a striped shirt, fastened at the waist by a leather belt; they had neither trousers nor even a kilt, the mildness of the temperature permitting so slight a costume. Paganel approved of a government that did not ruin itself in braid! Each of these babies carried a rifle and a sword, the sword too long and the gun too heavy for the youngest. They all had bronzed faces, and a certain family resemblance, and their drill sergeant resembled them. They were, in fact, twelve brothers being drilled by the thirteenth.

Paganel was not astonished; he knew from Argentine statistics that the average number of children exceeds nine to each household; but what did surprise him was, to see these little soldiers executing French manoeuvres with perfect precision, and many of the sergeant's orders given in the learned geographer's maternal language.

'That's queer,' he said.

But Glenarvan had not come to Fort Independence to see babies being drilled, still less to trouble himself about their nationality or their origin. He did not allow Paganel any time to be astonished, but begged him to ask for the chief of the garrison. One of the Argentine soldiers accordingly made his way towards a little house that served as barracks.

Some minutes later there appeared the commander in person. He was a man of fifty, vigorous, with a military air, fierce looking moustache, high cheekbones, iron-grey hair, and imperious eyes—at least, as far as could be seen through the clouds of smoke from his short pipe. His bearing reminded Paganel strongly of the old N.C.O.'s of his own country.

Thalcave introduced Lord Glenarvan and his companions; and meanwhile the commander stared at Paganel with embarrassing persistence. The savant was going to speak, when the commander caught hold of his arm, and in joyful tones, and in the geographer's language, he exclaimed: '*Un Français!*'

'Yes, *un Français!*' Paganel assured him.

'Ah! Enchanted! Welcomel—welcome! I'm French, too!' the commander repeated, shaking the savant's hand with alarming vigour.

'One of your friends?' the major asked Paganel.

'Yes,' said Paganel, with some pride. 'One has friends in the five quarters of the earth.'

And after having—not without trouble—disengaged his hand from the vice that was crushing it, he entered into conversation with the vigorous commander. Glenarvan would have liked to put in a word about the business that had brought him, but the soldier was telling his story, and was not inclined to stop in the middle. It was easy to see that the man had left France a long time ago; his maternal language was no longer familiar to him, and he had forgotten, if not the words, at least the way of putting them together. He spoke about as well as a neglo of the French colonies.

As his visitors were not long in learning, the commander of Fort Independence was a French sergeant. Since the fortress had been founded in 1828, he had never left it and he was then its commander with the consent of the Argentine Government. He was a Basque, named Manuel Ipharagueñe; if not Spanish, he was very near it. A year after his arrival in the country he had become naturalised, entered the service of the Argentine army, and married an Indian woman, who was then nursing two baby twins, six months old. Manuel could not imagine any but a soldier's profession, and he hoped in time, and with God's help, to offer the Republic an entire company of young soldiers.

'You have seen them!' he exclaimed. 'Charming! Good soldiers! José! Juan! Miquele! Pepe! Pepe is seven, and will make a famous *militaire*!'

Pepe, hearing himself praised, put his two little feet together and presented arms.

'He will be a colonel major or a general one of these days,' added the sergeant.

Sergeant Manuel seemed so delighted that it would have been a pity to contradict him either about the profession of arms, or the future reserved to his warlike progeny. He was happy, and as Goethe says, 'Nothing is an illusion that makes us happy.'

The sergeant's narrative lasted a quarter of an hour, to the great astonishment of Thalcave, who could not understand how so many words could come out of a single throat. No one interrupted him, but even a sergeant, and a French sergeant, must stop talking some time. Manuel was silent at last, but not till he had forced his guests to follow him into his dwelling, where they were presented to Madame Ipharagueñe. When at last they had done all he wished, the sergeant asked them to what he owed the honour of their visit.

Paganel told him about their journey across the Pampas, and ended by asking why the Indians had left the country.

'Ah! Nobody here!' the sergeant shrugged. 'That's true! Nobody there! And we have nothing to do!'

'But why?'

'War.'

'What war?'

'Civil war between the Paraguayans and Buenos Ayriens,' the sergeant explained.

'Well, what has that to do with it?'

'Why, all the Indians have gone north to pillage.'

'But where are the caciques?'

'Gone, too.'

This answer was reported to Thalcave, who nodded approvingly. He did not know, or had forgotten, the civil war which later claimed the intervention of Brazil, and depopulated the two parts of the Republic. The Indians have everything to gain by these intestine struggles, and they would not miss such a fine chance of pillage, so the sergeant was not mistaken in giving the civil war in the northern provinces as the reason for the abandonment of the Pampas.

But this event overthrew all Glenarvan's plans. If Captain Grant were a prisoner of the caciques, he must have been carried northward with them. What now could be done to find him? Must they undertake a perilous, and probably useless, search as far as the northern limits of the Pampas?

But there still remained an important question to put to the sergeant, and it was the major who thought of doing so, whilst his companions looked at one another in silence: 'Had the sergeant heard whether any Europeans had been taken prisoners by the caciques?'

Manuel thought for a few moments, as if searching his memory.

'Yes,' he said at last.

Paganel, MacNabbs, and Robert clustered round the sergeant.

'A few years ago,' answered Manuel, 'I heard of some European prisoners, but I have never seen them.'

'You mean less than two years ago,' said Glenarvan. 'The date of the shipwreck is definitely known. The *Britannia* was lost in June eighteen sixtytwo.'

'Oh, it is more than that, my lord. It was when Pepe was born. There were two men.'

'No, three!' said Glenarvan.

'Two' the sergeant declared.

'Two Englishmen?' Glenarvan was much surprised.

'No,' answered the sergeant. 'One was an Italian, and the other a Frenchman.'

'Wasn't the Italian massacred by the Poyuches?' cried Paganel.

'Yes, and I've since learnt that the Frenchman escaped.'

Everyone looked at the savant, who was striking his forehead as if in despair.

'Ah! I understand now,' he declared at last. 'It's all clear now!'

'But what does it all mean?' Glenarvan was getting uneasy and impatient.

'My friends,' answered Paganel, taking Robert's hand, 'we must resign ourselves to a great disappointment. We have been following a wrong trail. Instead of Captain Grant and his companions, it was one of my countrymen, young Guinnard, and his companion, Marco Vazello, that Thalcave had heard of. Vazello was assassinated by the Poyuches. The Frenchman accompanied the cruel Indians to the banks of the Colorado many times, and at last he escaped by crossing the Andes.'

This declaration was followed by complete silence. The error was obvious. The details given by the sergeant, the nationality of the prisoner, the murder of Guinnard's companion, his escape from the hands of the Indians, all confirmed this. Glenarvan looked at Thalcave disappointedly.

'Have you never heard of three English captives?' the Indian asked the sergeant.

'Never,' replied Manuel. 'It would have been known at Tandil, and I should have heard of it. No, there cannot have been any English captives.'

After this decisive answer, Glenarvan had nothing further to do at Fort Independence. So he and his friends went away, but not without thanking and shaking hands with the sergeant. He was in despair at this complete overthrow of his hopes. Robert walked at his side in silence, his eyes full of tears; nobody could find a word of consolation. Paganel talked to himself. The major did not open his lips. As to Thalcave, he seemed wounded to think that an Indian had been on a false scent, though nobody thought of reproaching him for so excusable an error.

They went back to the fonda, where their supper was melancholy. None of these courageous men regretted their useless fatigue, or the dangers they had run in vain. But they saw that all

hope of success was over: they would never find Captain Grant between the Sierra Tandil and the sea. If any prisoner had fallen into the hands of the Indians on the Atlantic coast, Sergeant Manuel would have been certain to hear of it. An event of that nature could not escape the attention of the natives who travel between Tandil and Carmen to the mouth of the Rio Negro. Everything is known amongst the traders of the Argentine Plain. So there was nothing to be done but to get to the *Dunian* as quickly as possible.

Meantime, Paganel had asked Glenarvan for the document on the strength of which their unsuccessful search had been undertaken. He tried to read a fresh interpretation into it.

'This document is very clear,' said Glenarvan. 'It states categorically the captain's shipwreck and the place of his captivity.'

'No,' the geographer answered, striking the table with his fist. 'As Captain Giant is not in the Pampas, he is not in America. Where he is, this document ought to say, and it shall, or my name is not Jacques Paganel!'

CHAPTER XXII

THE FLOOD

A DISTANCE of 150 miles separates Fort Independence from the shores of the Atlantic. Unless there were any unexpected and improbable delays, Glenarvan would rejoin the *Duncan* in four days' time. But he could not bring himself to the idea of returning on board without Captain Grant, after having so completely failed in his search, and next morning he did not think of giving the orders for departure. It was the major who took upon himself to have the horses saddled and their food supplies renewed. Thanks to his activity, the little troop, at eight were descending the grassy slopes of the Sierra Tandil.

Glenarvan, with Robert at his side, galloped on in silence; his brave resolute nature did not allow him to accept his want of success calmly. Paganel, exasperated by the difficulty, was turning over all the words of the document in his mind and trying to draw a fresh conclusion from them. Thalcave was silent, and left to Thaouka the task of guide. The major, always confident, remained solidly at his post, like a man who does not believe in failure. Tom Austin and his two sailors shared their master's vexation. At one moment a timid rabbit ran across the paths of the sierra in front of them, and the superstitious Scotsmen looked at one another.

'A bad sign,' exclaimed Wilson.

'Yes, in the Highlands,' answered Mulrady.

'What's bad in the Highlands is no better here,' Wilson replied sententiously.

Towards noon the travellers had cleared the Sierra Tandil, and reached the broad undulating plains that stretch down to the sea. At every step the limpid rios watered this fertile country, and lost themselves amongst the tall grass of the pastures. The ground regained its normal flatness, like the sea after a tempest. The last mountains of the Argentine Pampas had been crossed, and the monotonous prairie offered its long carpet of verdure to the horses' feet.

The weather so far had been fine, but the sky, that day, was not reassuring. The masses of vapour, engendered by the high

temperature of the preceding days, and accumulated in thick clouds, threatened to dissolve in torrents of rain. The neighbourhood of the Atlantic, and the west wind that reigns there, renders the climate particularly damp; its fertility, the abundant grass, and its sombre verdure, were evidences of that. But, that day, at least, the clouds did not break, and in the evening the horses, after having come gaily a distance of forty miles, stopped on the edge of deep *canadas*, immense natural ditches filled with water. No shelter was to be had. The ponchos served the travellers both for tents and rugs, and they went to sleep under a threatening sky, which fortunately stopped at threats.

The next day, as the plain grew lower, the presence of subterranean water was more clearly seen; dampness oozed from every pore in the ground. Soon large ponds, some already deep, others beginning to form, cut off the route eastward. Where there were only *lagunas*, small ponds free of aquatic plants, the horses could easily ford them; but with the unstable marshes, called *grentanos*, it was more difficult; tall grass obstructed them, and the travellers did not realise the danger until they were caught in them.

These quagmires had already been fatal to more than one animal. Robert, who had galloped on about half a mile in front, came rushing back, and cried 'Mr. Paganel! Mr. Paganel! A forest of horns!'

'What do you mean, boy?'

'There's a perfect forest of horns! How could they grow there? Did some one plant them?'

Paganel shrugged his shoulders, and told Robert he was dreaming.

'But he's speaking seriously,' said the major.

'You'll soon see for yourselves,' added Robert.

The boy was not mistaken; they soon found themselves confronting a veritable field of horns, regularly planted, and very thick.

'That's strange!' Paganel turned towards the Indian, and questioned him.

'The horns come out of the ground,' Thalcave explained, 'but the oxen are underneath.'

An immense herd had, in fact, sunk stifled in the vast quagmire. This tragedy, which often occurs in the Argentine Plain, could not be unknown to the Indian, and it was a warning not to be disregarded.

They rounded the immense hecatomb, which would have satisfied the most exciting deities of antiquity; soon the field of horns was two miles behind them. Thalcave noticed, with obvious anxiety, a state of things which did not seem at all usual. He frequently stopped, and raised himself in his stirrups; though his great height allowed him to take in a vast horizon, he could see nothing to enlighten him, and he soon continued his interrupted march. A mile further on he would stop again, then he would leave the straight road, go for some miles to the north or south, and return to the head of the little troop without saying what he either hoped or feared. This proceeding, many times repeated, puzzled Paganel, and made Glenarvan uneasy. The savant was asked to question him.

Thalcave answered that he was astonished to see the plain so drenched with water. Never to his knowledge, since he had become a guide, had he seen it in such a state. Even in the rainy season there were always paths.

'But of what do you attribute this increasing dampness?' asked Paganel.

'I don't know,' answered the Indian, 'and even if I did—'

'Do the rios ever overflow?'

'Sometimes.'

'Perhaps they're overflowing now?'

'Perhaps,' said Thalcave.

Paganel had to content himself with this half answer.

'And what does Thalcave advise?' Glenarvan wanted to know.

'What must be done?' Paganel asked the Patagonian.

'We must march quickly,' answered the Indian.

This was counsel easier to give than to follow. The horses grew fatigued with treading on ground that kept sinking beneath them; the depression grew deeper until part of the plain formed an immense hollow where the invading waters would rapidly accumulate.

They hastened on. But the water which spread in sheets before their horses' hoofs, was not enough: about two in the afternoon, the heavens opened in torrents of tropical rain. There never was a better chance of showing philosophy, for there was no way of getting out of the deluge, and the best thing was to receive it stoically. Their ponchos were dripping, the water fell from their hats as though from blocked roof-gutters, and the horsemen galloped on through a bath above and below.

It was thus that, wet through and worn out, they arrived at a

miserable rancho. It required much imagination to call it a shelter, but Glenarvan and his companions had no choice. A wretched grass fire, which gave out more smoke than heat, was lighted, though not without much trouble. The rain came through the rotten roof, and if the fire did not go out twenty times, it was because Wilson and Mulrady struggled against the invasion of water.

The inadequate supper was eaten in sadness. No one was hungry. The major alone ate as usual, impossibly superior to circumstances. As to Paganel, in his quality of Frenchman, he tried to joke, but it did not answer. 'My jokes are damp,' he said, 'they won't go off.'

The night was a bad one; the planks of the rancho cracked as if they would break; it bent under the gusts of wind, and threatened to be blown away: the unfortunate horses neighed outside, exposed to all the inclemency of the sky, and their masters were nearly as badly off in their wretched hut. However, sleep conquered at last. Robert was the first to close his eyes, and soon they were all asleep.

The night passed without accident, and they were awakened by Thaouka neighing outside, and knocking the wall of the hut with his hoof. In default of Thalcave, he knew when to give the signal for departure: they owed him too much not to obey him, and so they started.

The rain had diminished, but the soaked ground did not drink in the water, which, overflowing from ponds and marshes, formed immense *banados* of perfidious depth. Paganel, consulting his map, thought, not without reason, that the ríos Grande and Vivarota, which usually drain the water of that plain, must have met to form a bed several miles wide.

The common safety demanded great speed. If the flood increased, where should they find shelter? The immense circle of the horizon did not offer any rise, and on that horizontal plain the rush of water must be very rapid.

The horses were hurried on at top speed. Thaouka kept at the head, and deserved the name of sea-horse, for he bounded along as if in his natural element.

All at once, about ten, he gave signs of extreme agitation. He repeatedly turned towards the immense southern plains, neighed and reared so violently that he would have flung any one but Thalcave, who could scarcely hold him in. He foamed at the

mouth, and his master felt that if he were free he would gallop towards the north as fast as his legs would carry him.

'What's the matter with Thaouka?' asked Paganel. 'Has he been bitten by the leeches?'

'No,' replied the Indian.

'Is he frightened?'

'Yes, he feels danger—'

'What?'

'I do not know.'

If the eye did not yet reveal the peril that Thaouka felt, at least the ear did: a noise like that of the rising tide could be heard beyond the limits of the horizon. The wind was blowing in hurried gusts; the birds, flying from some unknown phenomenon, cleaved the air with rapid wing; the horses were half up their legs in water. Soon a formidable noise of lowing, neighing, and bleating was heard about half a mile to the south, and immense herds appeared running over each other in their flight. It was scarcely possible to distinguish them amidst the waves they were raising. A hundred whales of the largest size would not have made more commotion amidst the ocean billows.

'*Anda, anda!*' (Quick, quick!) cried Thalcave, in a startling voice.

'What is it?' said Paganel.

'The flood!' answered Thalcave, spurring on his horse toward the north.

His companions fled on after him. It was time. Five miles to the south the country was being transformed into an ocean. The tall grass disappeared as if it were being mowed down. The mimosa thickets, dragged up by the current, drifted and formed floating islands. The great rivers of the Pampas had evidently broken their banks, and perhaps the waters of the Colorado on the north and the Rio Negro on the south were mingling in a common bed.

The flood rushed on with the speed of a racehorse, and the travellers flew before it like clouds before the winds. Their eyes in vain sought a place of refuge: water and sky were intermingled on the horizon. The horses, excited by the peril, galloped at a fearful pace, and it was as much as their riders could do to keep in the saddle. Glenarvan kept looking behind him, to where the great tide was lifting its foaming head not two miles away.

This struggle against the most terrible of the elements lasted a

quarter of an hour. The fugitives could not judge the distance they had traversed, but from the speed of their horses it must have been great. The horses were immersed up to their breasts, and found the greatest difficulty in keeping their feet. It would be impossible to describe the anguish of these eight men at feeling themselves powerless to struggle against Nature, and no longer masters of their own destiny. Five minutes later their horses were swimming; the current was dragging them along with incomparable violence, and at a speed equal to their most rapid gallop. All salvation seemed impossible, when the major's voice was heard—

'A tree!'

'There, over there!' cried Thalcave, pointing to a gigantic walnut tree rising out of the water about 800 yards to the north. They felt they must reach it at any cost, though the horses, no doubt, would never reach it, the men might, for the current was carrying them towards it. But then Ioni Austin's horse uttered a stifled neigh, and disappeared. His master, disengaged from the stirrups, began to swim vigorously.

'Hold on to my saddle,' Glenarvan shouted.

'I can swim, your lordship,' Austin replied.

'How about your horse, Robert?' said Glenarvan.

'He's swimming like a fish, my lord.'

'Look out!' the major almost shrieked.

These words were hardly pronounced when the enormous crest arrived. A monstrous wave, at least forty feet high, swallowed up the fugitives with a frightful din. Men and animals disappeared in a vortex of foam, a liquid mass, weighing several millions of tons, engulfed them in its furious waters. When it had roared past, the men came up to the surface and counted each other rapidly; but all the horses, excepting Thaouka, who still bore his master, had disappeared for ever.

'Hold on!' cried Glenarvan, who was supporting Paganel with one arm and swimming with the other.

'All right!' answered the worthy savant; 'and, after all, I'm not sorry—'

What he was not sorry for was never known, for the poor man had to swallow the end of his sentence with half a pint of muddy water. The major advanced calmly, and as regularly as a professional swimmer. Robert hung on to Thaouka's mane and let himself float. The superb horse was making for the tree as if by instinct, and in a few minutes it was reached by the entire troop.

—fortunately, for if this refuge had failed, all chance of safety would have been over, and they would have perished in the flood. The water rose to the first branches, making them easy to reach. Thalcave abandoned his horse, lifted Robert up, climbed after him, and helped the exhausted swimmers with his powerful arms. But Thaouka, dragged away by the current, was rapidly disappearing; he turned his intelligent head towards his master, shook his long mane, and called him with plaintive neighs.

'Do you mean to let him go?' Paganel shouted to Thalcave.

The Indian answered by plunging into the water, and reappeared twenty yards from the tee. A few minutes later his arm was round Thaouka's neck and horse and rider were floating together towards the misty northern horizon.

CHAPTER XXIII

PERCHED LIKE BIRDS

THE TREE on which Glenarvan and his companions had just found refuge resembled a walnut, with the same shining foliage and round structure. It was really the *ombu*. This tree, with its enormous crooked trunk, is fastened to the ground not only by its large roots but also by vigorous stems, so that it had withstood the flood. It was about 100 feet high, and might cover, with its shade, a circumference of 360 feet. All its boughs rested on three large branches, two of which rose almost perpendicularly and supported the immense parasol of foliage, so thick that it formed an impenetrable shelter. The third branch stretched nearly horizontally over the roaring waters; its lowest leaves were already dipping into them; it looked like a long cape on an island of greenery, surrounded by the sea. There was plenty of space within this gigantic tree, and openings in the foliage let in air and light.

On the arrival of the fugitives, a whole winged tribe fled off the topmost boughs, protesting, by their cries, against so flagrant an usurpation of their home. These birds, who also had taken refuge in the solitary *ombu*, were there by hundreds—blackbirds, starlings, osacas, hilgueros, and brilliant-hued humming birds; as they fled, it seemed as if a gust of wind had despoiled the tree of all its flowers.

Such was the refuge offered to Glenarvan's followers. Young Grant and the agile Wilson were scarcely in the tree when they hastened to climb to its topmost branches, whence their heads pierced the dome of verdure, enabling them to survey a wide horizon. The ocean formed by the flood surrounded them on every side. No tree rose out of the liquid plain; even the *ombu*, alone in the midst of the waves, trembled at their shock. In the distance there floated from south to north uprooted trees, broken branches, the roofs of estancias and ranchos, the drowned bodies of animals, and a tree bearing a whole family of roaring jaguars, who clung with their paws to their fragile raft. Farther still, a black spot, already almost invisible, attracted Wilson's attention.

It was Thalcave and his faithful Thaouka disappearing into the distance

'Thalcave dear Thalcave!' cried Robert stretching out his hand towards the brave Patagonian

'He will save himself Mr Robert' answered Wilson, 'but we'd better go down to his lordship'

Robert and the sailor descended the three stories of branches and landed at the top of the trunk Glenarvan, Pigmal and the major Austin and Muhidy were there seated astride or holding on as best they could. Wilson described his visit to the top of the tree and the others shared his opinion about Thalcave, the only doubt being as to whether Thalcave would save Thaouka, or Thaouka would save Thalcave.

Their position in the ombo was much more alarming. The tree would not yield to the current but the flood as it increased might reach its topmost branches for the depth of that part of the plain turned it into a deep reservoir. Glenarvan's first care was to have the water sounded in different places to ascertain its level. It was then stationary and seemed to have attained its greatest height. That was reassuring.

'Now what are we going to do?' he asked.

'Make our nest of course' answered Pigmal gaily.

'Make our nest' cried Robert.

'Yes my boy well have to live a bird's life as we can't be fishes.'

'But who will fill our beaks?' asked Glenarvan.

'I will' declared the major.

They all looked at MacNabbs; he was comfortably seated in a natural arm chair formed of two elastic branches and in one hand was holding out his saddle bags wet but full.

'Ah MacNabbs' cried Glenarvan 'that's just like you. You think of everything even when there's a *city* excuse for forgetting.'

'As long as I am not going to drown I didn't mean to starve' the major answered.

I should have thought of it' Pigmal said naively 'but I am so absent minded.'

'How much do the bags hold?' asked Tom Austin.

'Enough for seven men for two days' replied MacNabbs.

'I hope we shan't need it all' said Glenarvan 'and that the water will have gone down within twenty four hours.'

'Or that we'll have found some way of getting to terra firma,' replied Paganel

Our first duty, then, is to dine Glenarvan suggested

'After we've dried ourselves,' observed the major

How about a fire?' asked Wilson

We must make one answered Paganel

'Where?'

'On the top of the trunk of course

What with?

Some of the dried wood we'll find in the tree

But how are we to light it?' asked Glenarvan Our tinder is like a wet sponge

We can do without it answered Paganel, a little dry moss, a ray of sunlight the lens of my telescope, and you'll see a fire very soon Who's going to look for wood in the forest?'

Me cried Robert

And followed by his friend Wilson he disappeared like a young cat into the depths of the tree Meanwhile Paganel found some dried moss he lighted this without any difficulty with his lens, for the sun was shining brightly then the top of the trunk formed a natural hearth Soon Wilson and Robert came back with armfuls of dried wood which was thrown on the moss Paganel to make the fire draw placed himself above it his two long legs stretched out Aish fashion then he made a fan with his poncho

There was soon a brilliant fire and they dried themselves and hung their ponchos up in the tree Then the food was divided into rations as they had to think of the future and they dined The immense basin might perhaps empty itself less quickly than Glenarvan hoped and they had few provisions There was no fruit on the ombu but happily it offered a supply of fresh eggs, thanks to the numerous nests in the branches not to mention the young birds left in them These resources were not to be disdained and as they might have to stay some time in the tree, they proceeded to install themselves as comfortably as possible

As the kitchen and the dining room are on the ground floor, said Paganel we'll sleep on the first storey The house is vast, the rent isn't much, we must make ourselves at home I can see some natural cradles up there, so when we're well fastened in, we can sleep as well as in the best of beds We've nothing to fear Besides, we shall keep watch and there are enough of us to repulse any number of Indians or wild beasts

'We only need arms,' Austin pointed out.
'I've got my revolvers,' said Glenarvan.
'And I mine,' added Robert.
'What's the use of them,' asked Tom Austin, 'unless Mr. Paganel can make some powder?'

'There's no need for that,' MacNabbs displayed a cartridge-case in perfect condition.

'Where did you get it, major?' asked Paganel.
'From Thalcave. He thought it might be useful, and he gave it to me before he plunged.'

'Generous and brave Indian!' cried Glenarvan.
'Yes,' answered Tom Austin, 'if he's a typical Patagonian, I must compliment Patagonia.'

'I ask that the horse may not be forgotten,' said Paganel. 'He's part of the Patagonian, and I'm much mistaken if we don't see them again, the one carrying the other.'

'How far are we from the Atlantic?' asked the major.
'Not forty miles,' answered Paganel. 'And now, my friends, I ask permission to leave you; I'm going to choose an observatory up there, and with my long telescope, I'll keep you informed about the things of this world.'

The savant skilfully pulled himself up from branch to branch, and disappeared behind the thick curtain of foliage. His companions then got ready for the night. There was no bed to make, or furniture to arrange, so it did not take long. Then they came back, and talked round the fire, not about their present position — there was nothing for it but to bear that in patience. But they returned to the inexhaustible theme of Captain Grant. If the water sank, the *Duncan* would get her passengers back in three days, but Captain Grant and his two poor sailors would not be with them. After their want of success, after their useless journey across America, all hope of finding them seemed to be irreversibly lost. Where could they renew the search. What distress it would give to Lady Glenarvan and Mary Grant!

'My poor sister!' said Robert
Glenarvan, for the first time, could find no word of consolation. What hope could he give the child? Hadn't he followed the indications on the document with rigid exactitude?

'And yet,' said he, 'this thirtyseventh degreee of latitude whether it applies to the place of shipwreck or of the captivity, is marked clearly enough. It is very distressing and quite hopeless.'

'Distressing, if you like,' MacNabbs answered quietly, 'but not hopeless.'

'What's left to do now?' asked Glenarvan.

'A very simple and logical thing,' answered MacNabbs. 'Once on board the *Duncan* we can make for the east, and, if necessary, follow this thirtyseventh parallel somewhere else.'

'I'll go round the world on the thirtyseventh parallel, if necessary,' Glenarvan declared. 'But ought we at once, and for ever, to give up our search on the American continent?'

No one replied.

'What do you say, major?' continued Glenarvan.

'To answer your question, *hic et nunc*, is to incur a grave responsibility,' answered the major. 'I must have time to think about it. First of all, I want to know what countries are crossed by the thirtyseventh parallel of austial latitude.'

'That's Paganel's affair,' answered Glenarvan.

'Then we must ask him,' replied the major.

The savant was no longer in sight, but hidden by the thick foliage of the *ombu*.

'Paganel! Paganel!' called Glenarvan.

'Yes,' answered a voice from above.

'Where are you?'

'In my tower.'

'What are you doing up there?'

'I'm surveying the horizon.'

'Can you come down for a minute?'

'What for?'

'We want to know what countries are crossed by the thirtyseventh parallel.'

'I needn't come down to tell you that. On leaving America it crosses the Atlantic.'

'Well go on.'

'It meets the Tristan d'Acunha Islands and then passes two degrees below the Cape of Good Hope.'

'Well!'

'Then it crosses the Indian Ocean near the Amsterdam and St. Paul Islands, and crosses Australia in the province of Victoria. On leaving Australia—'

But this last sentence was never finished. Was the geographer hesitating? Had he forgotten for once? No, but a terrible cry, a violent exclamation was heard from the heights of the *ombu*. Glenarvan and his friends grew pale as they looked at one another.

other. Had some fresh disaster happened? Had Paganel fallen off? Wilson and Mulrady were already rushing to his help when a long body appeared. Paganel was tumbling from branch to branch. Was he alive or dead? Nobody could tell, but he was on the point of falling into the roaring torrent, when the major put out his arm and stopped him.

'Much obliged, MacNabbs,' exclaimed Paganel.

'What's the matter with you?' asked the major. 'What happened? Absence of mind again?'

'Yes, yes,' Paganel replied in a voice stifled by emotion.

'Yes! More absence of mind! This time it's phenomenal!'

'What?'

'We've all been mistaken! We're still mistaken!'

'What about?'

'Glenarvan, major, Robert, my friends,' cried Paganel. 'listen to me, we're looking for Captain Grant where he isn't; and only where he isn't but where he has never been!'

SILL LIVING LIKE BIRDS

THESE UNEXPECTED words were received in the deepest astonishment. What did the geographer mean? Had he gone out of his mind?

'Yes' he continued in tones of conviction. 'we've misread the document.'

'Explain yourself Paganel,' said the major calmly.

'It is very simple major I was in error like you, when a few minutes ago at the top of that three, answering your questions, and stopping at the word 'Australia,' an idea flashed across my brain!'

'Do you imagine then said Glenarvan 'that Captain Grant—'

I imagine that the word *austral* is not a complete word as we have believed till now, but the root of the word 'Australia.'

'That may be Glenarvan agreed if the name of 'continent' can be applied to Australia which is only an island.'

The best geographers agree in calling it the Australian continent.

'Then I have only one thing to say said Glenarvan We'll go to Australia and may Heaven help us!'

Thus ended the conversation which had given them renewed hope. They could leave this American continent without fear. They would not now take despair back with them on board the *Duncan*. Now, they had only one regret, that of not being able to start at once.

It was then four in the evening. They decided to have supper at six. Paganel wanted to celebrate the occasion, and asked Robert to go and shoot in the 'neighbouring forest'. Robert clapped his hands at the idea and they set out.

'Don't go too far' the major told them gravely.

After their departure, Glenarvan and MacNabbs went to look at the marks they had cut in the tree showing the water level whilst Wilson and Mulrady again made up the fire. Glenarvan, going down to the surface of the immense lake, saw no signs that the waters were falling. They seemed to have reached their maximum height, though the violence with which they ran from south

to north proved that equilibrium was not yet established between the Argentine rivers. Before going down, this mass of water had to remain still, as the sea does at high tide before the ebb. They could not depend upon the water's going down while it ran northward with such rapidity.

Whilst Glenarvan and the major made these observations, they could hear shots in the tree accompanied by shouts of joy. When they came back to the fire they saw that Wilson had had an excellent idea. With a pin and a piece of string he had been fishing, and several dozens of small fish *Mojarras*, as delicate as white-bait, lay in a fold of his poncho, and promised to make an exquisite dish.

Then the sportsmen came down the tree, Paganel carefully carrying some black swallows' eggs and a number of sparrows. Robert had skilfully brought down some couples of *hilgueros*, little green and yellow birds, excellent to eat, and much in demand on the market place. Paganel, who knew fifty and one ways of preparing eggs, had this time to content himself with cooking them under the hot cinders. Nevertheless the meal was varied and delicate: dried meat, baked eggs, grilled mojarras, sparrows, and roasted hilgueros, formed one of those repasts that live in the memory.

The conversation was very lively and Paganel was complimented on his double quality of sportsman and cook. The savant accepted these congratulations modestly, and then gave himself up to guesses about the magnificent *ombu* which was sheltering him under its foliage.

'Robert and I once thought that we were going to lose ourselves,' he joked. 'I looked in vain for the traces of my footsteps. The sun was going down, and I was cruelly hungry. The sombre thickets already echoed with the roaring of wild beasts—. But, no! There are no wild beasts, and I am sorry for it.'

'What,' Glenarvan exclaimed, 'you miss the wild beasts?'

'Yes, certainly.'

'But there's everything to be feared from their ferocity.'

'Ferocity does not exist—scientifically speaking,' the savant declared.

'Ah, Paganel,' said the major, 'you'll never get me to admit the utility of wild animals. What were they made for?'

'To be classified, major,' was Paganel's reply.

'If I had been one of Noah's companions in the Ark,' MacNabbs reflected, 'I should certainly have prevented that impru-

dent patriarch from taking lions, tigers, and panthers, and such like useless and mischievous animals.'

'Well, from a zoological point of view, that would have been a mistake,' said Paganel, 'and for my part I should have kept the megatheria and the pterodactyls, and all the other antediluvian animals.'

'And I tell you,' replied MacNabbs, 'that Noah did quite right to leave them to their fate.'

'And I tell you that he has merited for ever the malediction of the savants!'

Glenarvan interrupted the discussion: 'Whether or not it's to be regretted, either from a scientific or any other point of view, to be deprived of wild animals, today we must resign ourselves to their absence. Paganel could not hope to meet with them in this aerial forest.'

'Why not?' answered the savant.

'Wild animals on a tree?' said Tom Austin.

'Certainly, the American tiger, the jaguar, when hunted, often takes refuge in trees. One of these animals, surprised by the flood, might have taken refuge amongst the branches of the *ombu*.'

'Well, you haven't seen one, I suppose?' said the major.

'No,' Paganel answered. 'And it's a pity, for that would have been worth shooting. The jaguar is a famous flesh-eater: with one stroke of his paw he can break a horse's neck. When he has once tasted human flesh he comes back to it with gusto. He likes Indian flesh best, then negro, then mulatto, and then white.'

'I'm delighted only to come in the fourth place!' answered MacNabbs.

'It's humiliating,' said Paganel. 'The white man thinks he's the first of men. It seems that the jaguar is of a different opinion.'

'However that may be, Paganel,' Glenarvan replied, 'seeing there are neither Indians, negroes, nor mulattos amongst us, I rejoice in the absence of your jaguars. Our position is not so agreeable.'

'How, agreeable!' cried Paganel; 'you surely don't complain of your lot, Glenarvan?'

'I do,' Glenarvan answered. 'Are you comfortable on these hairy branches?'

'I have never been more so, even in my study. We are leading the life of birds, singing and fluttering. I begin to believe that men were meant to live in trees.'

'They only need wings!' said the major.

'They'll make themselves some one day.'

'In the meantime,' answered Glenarvan, 'allow me to prefer the gravel of a park, the floor of a room, or the deck of a ship.'

'Glenarvan,' Paganel replied, 'we must learn to accept things as they come. If they are good, so much the better; if bad, we must take no notice. I see that you regret the comforts of Malcolm Castle.'

'No, but—'

'I'm sure that Robert's perfectly happy,' said Paganel, glad of the chance of making one convert to his theories.

'Yes, Mr. Paganel, that I am!' cried Robert.

'That's the privilege of his age,' answered Glenarvan.

'And of mine, too,' answered the savant. 'The less needs we have, the happier we are. If you like, I will tell you a little Arabian story this reminds me of.'

'Oh, do, Mr. Paganel,' said Robert.

'Once upon a time,' said Paganel, 'a son of the great Haround al Raschid was not happy. He went to consult an old dervish. The wise old man told him that happiness was hard to find in this world. 'However,' said he, 'I know an infallible method of making you happy.' 'What is it?' asked the young prince. 'It,' said the dervish, 'you can once put on the shirt of a happy man, you'll be happy too.' Thereupon the young prince embraced the dervish, and went to look for this talisman. He visited all the capitals of the world. He tried on kings' shirts, emperors' shirts, and the shirts of princes and lords; but all to no purpose. He was none the happier. Then he put on artists', warriors', and merchants' shirts. Still useless! At last, in despair at having tried on so many shirts, he was coming back one day, very sad, to his father's palace, when he met with a labourer singing at his plough. "If that man isn't happy," he thought, "then happiness does not exist on earth." He went up to him. "Good morning," said he, "are you happy?" "Yes," answered the man. "Don't you wish for anything?" "No." "You wouldn't change your lot for that of a king?" "Never." "Well, will you sell me your shirt?" "My shirt? I haven't got one!"

CHAPTER XXV

BETWEEN FIRE AND WATER

PAGANEL'S STORY was well received, but it convinced no one, and in the meantime the sun had set. A good sleep would be the only fit ending to this exciting day. The travellers were fatigued not only with their dangers, but also with the heat, which had been excessive all day. Their winged companions had already set them the example of retiring, the *hilgueros*, those Pampas nightingales, had ceased their melodies, and all the birds had disappeared into the depths of the dark foliage. The best thing to do was to imitate them.

However, before 'going to roost,' as Paganel said, Glenarvan, Robert and he climbed up to the observatory to examine the liquid plain for the last time. It was about nine, and the sun had just gone down in the mists of the western horizon. All that half of the celestial sphere, to the zenith, was bathed in warm vapour. The constellations, so brilliant in the austial hemisphere seemed veiled in light gauze, and appeared only indistinctly. But they were distinguishable enough to be recognised, and Paganel pointed out to Robert that circumpolar zone where the stars are brightest. Among others, he pointed out the Southern Cross, a group of four stars of first and second magnitude like a lozenge, and about the height of the pole, the Centaur, where shines the nearest star to the earth, the Magellanic clouds two vast nebulosities, of which the largest covers a space of two hundred times as large as the apparent surface of the moon, then, at last, the 'Black Hole' where the stars seem to fail completely.

To his great regret, Orion, which is seen in both hemispheres, had not yet appeared, but Paganel told his two listeners of a strange fact in Patagonian cosmography. In the eyes of the poetical Indians, Orion represents an immense lasso and three bolas launched by the hand of a hunter in the celestial plains. All these constellations reflected in the mirror of the water demanded admiration, as they made skies both above and below.

Whilst Paganel was talking, the whole of the eastern horizon began to look stormy. A dark thick mass, clearly outlined, was coming up gradually and putting out the stars. This cloud soon

enveloped the half of the vault its motive power seemed to reside in itself, for there was not a breath of wind. Not a leaf moved on the tree not a ripple on the surface of the water. The air was saturated with electricity, and the nervous system was strung up to its greatest tension.

'We're going to have a storm,' said Paganel.

'You're not afraid of thunder are you Robert?' said Glenarvan to the boy.

'Not at all, my lord. Robert assured him.'

'Well, so much the better, for we shall soon have a storm.'

'And a terrific one, too,' said Paganel, 'if we can judge from the state of the sky.'

'It's not the storm that makes me uneasy,' Glenarvan commented, 'but the torrents of rain that will accompany it. We shall be wet through to the marrow of our bones. Whatever you may say, Paganel, a rest isn't enough for a man as you will soon learn to your cost.'

'Oh with philosophy!' answered the savant.

'Philosophy won't keep you dry.'

'No, but it warms you.'

'Well,' said Glenarvan, 'let's go down and tell our friends to wrap themselves up in their philosophy as well as their ponchos, and lay in a good stock of patience for they'll need it badly.'

He and his two companions slid down the smooth branches and were rather surprised to find themselves in a sort of twilight produced by myriads of luminous points which buzzed about the surface of the water.

'Are they phosphorescence?' asked Glenarvan.

'No,' answered Paganel, 'but phosphorescent insects living diamonds and not expensive, of which the ladies of Buenos Aires make magnificent jewellery.'

'What! cried Robert, 'those insects flying about like sparks?'

'Yes, my boy.'

Robert caught one of these brilliant insects. Paganel was not mistaken; it was a sort of large drone fly about an inch long to which the Indians have given the name of *tucu tucu*. This strange creature gave off light from two spots situated in front of its thorax and its light would have been enough to read by. Paganel put the insect near his watch and could see that it was ten o'clock.

As there would probably be strong wind with the storm, they fastened themselves strongly on their bed of branches. If they

could not shelter themselves against the rain, they could, at least, take care not to fall into the rapid current dashing against the trunk of the tree. They wished each other goodnight, without much hope of getting what they wished for. Then each climbed into his aerial couch, wrapped himself in his poncho, and awaited sleep.

But the approach of great natural phenomena makes the strongest natures uneasy. The travellers were anxious and oppressed, and could not close their eyes, and the first clap of thunder found them all awake. It came about eleven as a distant rumbling. Glenarvan went to the end of the horizontal branch and put his head out of the foliage. The darkness was crossed by lively brilliant flashes reflected clearly by the waters of the lake.

'What do you think about it, Glenarvan?'

'I think it's beginning well, and if it goes on the storm will be terrible.'

'So much the better,' Paganel was enthusiastic. 'I should like a fine spectacle, as we can't escape it.'

'That's another of your theories that will explode,' said the major.

'And one of my best, MacNabbs. I am of Glenarvan's opinion —the storm will be superb! Just now, while I was trying to sleep, several facts came back to my memory which make me hope it will, for we are in the region of great electric tempests. I have read somewhere that, in seventeen ninetythree, in the one province of Buenos Ayres, there were thirty-seven thunder-bolts in one storm. My colleague, M. Martin de Moussy, counted fifty-five minutes of uninterrupted rumbling.'

'Watch in hand?' asked the major.

'Watch in hand. One thing makes me uneasy,' added Paganel, 'and that is, that the only lofty point of this plain is precisely this tree, and among all those of the Pampas it is the one the lightning likes best. And you know, my friends, that it's especially undesirable to seek refuge under trees during a storm.'

'I must say' commented the major 'that this advice has come just at the right time.'

'You have chosen a good time to tell us, Paganel,' agreed Glenarvan.

'Bah!' replied Paganel; 'every moment is good to learn in. Ah! there's the beginning!'

Claps of thunder of increased violence interrupted this inopportune conversation. Incessant flashes of the most varied

character, some launched perpendicularly to the ground, were repeated five or six times in the same place. Others would have excited scientific curiosity to the highest point; for if Arago, in his remarkable statistics, speaks of only two examples of forked lightning, here they reproduced themselves here by hundreds. Some, divided into a thousand different branches, looked like coralliform zig-zags, and produced on the darkness an astounding effect of arborescent light.

Soon the whole sky, from the east to the north, was hung with a phosphorescent band of intense brilliancy. It gradually lighted up the whole horizon; setting fire to the clouds, and reflected in the water, it made an immense sphere of fire whose central point was the ombu. Glenarvan and his companions watched this terrific spectacle in silence. They could not have heard one another speak. Sheets of white light seemed to envelope them; and during the rapid flashes there appeared, to disappear at once, the calm face of the major, Paganel's inquisitive intent expression, Glenarvan's energetic features, Robert's scared face, or the careless look of the sailors.

Yet the rain and the wind kept off. But soon the floodgates of heaven were opened, and the rain came straight down in vertical stripes, like the threads of a weaver on a black ground. The great drops struck the surface of the lake, looking like thousands of sparks kindled by the lightning.

Did this rain announce the end of the storm? Would Glenarvan and his companions be quit with a thorough wetting? No. A globe of fire, about the size of a hand, and surrounded by black smoke, suddenly appeared at the end of the principal branch. This globe, after revolving for a few seconds, burst like a cannon-ball, and with such a noise that it could be heard in the midst of the general uproar. A sulphurous vapour filled the atmosphere. There was an instant's silence, and then Tom Austin could be heard shouting—

'The tree's on fire!'

At that moment flames burst out on all the western side of the ombu; the dead wood, the dried birds' nests, and, indeed, everything inflammable was on fire. The wind as it rose, made the blaze fiercer, and the travellers had to seek refuge in the eastern part, so far untouched, of the tree, making its branches crack under their weight. But the branches crackled and spluttered in the flame, like serpents burning alive, and the travellers were almost suffocated by the smoke; an intolerable heat surrounded

them, and the fire was spreading round the lower part of the tree. Nothing could stop it or put it out, their situation at last became intolerable, and of two deaths they had to choose the least cruel.

'Into the water!' cried Glenarvan.

Wilson, whom the flames had reached, threw himself into the lake, but at once, in tones of the most violent terror, he shouted—
'Help! help!'

Austin rushed to his aid and helped him to get back to the summit of the tree.

'What is it?'

'Alligators!'

There were a dozen of these ferocious animals, called caimans in Spanish America.

At this sight the travellers gave themselves up for lost. A frightful death awaited them either from the flames or from the alligators, and even the major was heard to say calmly—

'The end has come at last!'

But then a gigantic wave, coming from the south, pushed over the ombu and shook it to its roots. The tree trembled and fell, its flaming branches hissing as they dropped into the waters. Then it drifted along under the combined efforts of current and wind. All the alligators had been swept away—except for one, which climbed on to the overturned roots and advanced with open jaws, but Mulrady, seizing a flaming branch struck the animal such a blow that he broke its back and it fell into the torrent, which its formidable tail still smote violently.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ATLANTIC

FOR two hours the ombu sailed along the immense lake without reaching terra firma. The flames were almost extinguished, and the greatest danger was over: the major said that he should not be surprised if they escaped after all. The current, still keeping its first direction, ran south-west to north-east. The darkness, scarcely broken at intervals by a few flashes, had again become profound, and Paganel in vain sought for anything on the horizon. The storm was nearly over, and the rain gave place to a light drizzle, the wind scattered it, and the thick clouds split into bands.

The ombu went along as rapidly as if some powerful engine were enclosed in its bark. Nothing suggested that it might not drift in this manner for days. About three in the morning, however, the major pointed out that the roots were occasionally brushing the ground. Using a long branch, Tom Austin sounded the water carefully, and saw that the land was rising. Twenty minutes later a shock was felt and the ombu stopped abruptly.

'Land! Land!' shouted Paganel.

Never were people so glad to touch solid ground. Before they had 'gone ashore' a well-known whistle was heard, and a horse and rider soon came in sight.

'Thalcave!' exclaimed Robert.

'Amigos!' replied the Patagonian, who had been waiting there for the current to bring them to him, just as it had brought him.

They surrounded him while he 'lifted Robert up and kissed him. Glenarvan, the major, and the sailors were very happy to see their faithful guide again, and pressed his hands with vigorous cordiality. Then the Patagonian led them to an abandoned estancia. There a good fire was burning; it soon warmed them, and on it lay succulent slices of venison, of which they did not leave a scrap. When they had time to think, not one of them could believe that he had escaped the dangers of fire, water, and alligators.

In a few words, Thalcave related his own experiences to Paganel, and gave Thaouka the honour of having saved him. Pag-

anel tried to explain the interpretation of the document, but all that the Indian understood was that his friends seemed happy and confident, and that was all he cared for.

It may well be believed that these daring travellers, after their day's rest on the *ombu*, did not want much persuasion to set out again at eight next morning. They were too far south of the *estancias* and *saladeros* to get any means of transport, so they had to travel on foot. They had only forty miles to go, and Thaouka would not refuse to carry a tired pedestrian, or even two if necessary, and in thirty-six hours they might reach the shores of the Atlantic.

The guide and his companions then left the flood behind them and again made their way over more elevated country. The Argentine Plain again lay before them in all its monotony, a few woods, planted by European hands, rose above the pasturages, but they were rare around the *Sierras*; the native trees grow only on the borders of these long prairies, and near Cape Corrientes.

The day was spent in that way, and next day they felt the ocean only fifteen miles away. The *amazon*, a strong wind which blows regularly, was bending the tall grass from the impoverished soil rose thin woods of arborescent mimosas and acacias; and saline lagunes mirrored their surroundings like pieces of broken glass and made the march longer, as the travellers had to walk round them.

They hurried on to reach Salado Lake, on the shore of the ocean, that day, and they were pretty well tired when, at eight in the evening, they saw the tall sand dunes, and heard the roar of the rising tide. The travellers, whose strength, till then, had seemed nearly exhausted, climbed the dunes with remarkable agility. But the darkness was already great, and they tried in vain to pierce the sombre immincency, and to see the *Duncan*.

'She must be there, however,' Glenarvan reassured them, 'waiting for us.'

'We'll see her tomorrow,' MacNabbs answered.

Tom Austin hailed the invisible yacht, but could get no response. The wind was very strong: there was a rough sea, and the foaming crests of the waves licked the summits of the dune. There was no bay, port, or even creek, on that part of the coast which consisted of long sand-banks which extended under the sea, and which make the approach more dangerous than rocks. So it was very natural that Captain Mangles should keep the

Duncan a good distance out, and Tom Austin declared that she must be at least five good miles away. The major begged Glenarvan to wait for daylight in patience, and set about organising their camp on the dunes; the last of the food was eaten, and then following the major's example, they dug themselves a bed in a comfortable hole, covered themselves up to their chins with a blanket of sand, and slept profoundly.

Glenarvan alone lay awake, unable to get used to the idea of having the *Duncan* so near. As to supposing that she had not arrived at the agreed rendezvous, that was inadmissible. They had left Talcahuano Bay on 14th October, and they had now arrived on 12th November on the shores of the Atlantic. During the thirty days, they had spent in crossing Chili, the Cordilleras, the Pampas, and the Argentine Plains, the *Duncan* had had time to double Cape Horn and arrive off the opposite coast. The tempest had certainly been violent, and its fury on the vast battlefield of the Atlantic terrible; but the yacht was a good ship and her captain a good sailor.

But these reflections were not enough to calm Glenarvan. When heart and reason are struggling, it is not reason that is the stronger. The laird of Malcolm Castle felt the presence in that darkness of all those he loved, his dear Helena, Mary Grant, the crew of his *Duncan*. He wandered about the shore, watching and listening, and even fancied at times that he had caught a glimpse of a light out at sea.

'I can't be wrong,' he told himself; 'it must be the *Duncan's* lights. Ah! why can't my eyes pierce this darkness?'

An idea then came: Paganel called himself a nyctalops. He went and awoke the savant, who was sound asleep when a vigorous arm dragged him from his sandy bed.

'What's the matter?' he cried.

'It's me,' Glenarvan told him. 'I want your eyes.'

'My eyes?' Paganel rubbed them vigorously.

'Yes, your eyes, to make out the *Duncan* in this darkness. Come along!'

Paganel, only half awake, followed his friend along the coast and Glenarvan begged him to scrutinise the dark sea horizon. For a few minutes Paganel devoted himself conscientiously to this.

'Well, don't you see anything?' Glenarvan asked.

'Nothing; even a cat couldn't see two feet in front of its nose.'

'Look out for a green or red light—the starboard or port riding-lights.'

'I can't see either green nor red light, it's all black,' answered Paganel, whose eyes closed involuntarily. For half-an-hour he followed his impatient friend mechanically, letting his head fall on his chest, and then lifting it as if ashamed. He was stumbling and staggering like a drunken man and Glenarvan saw that he was walking in his sleep, so he took him by the arm back to his sand-hole, where he buried him comfortably.

At daybreak everyone was awakened by a shout—

'The *Duncan!* the *Duncan!*'

There lay the yacht, five miles off, her sails reefed and her steam up, her smoke disappearing in the morning mist. The sea was very rough and a ship of that tonnage could not approach the sandbanks without danger.

Glenarvan took Paganel's telescope and watched the *Duncan*, while Thalcave loaded his rifle and fired it towards the yacht. They listened and looked. Three times did the Indian awaken the echoes of the dunes with the report of his rifle. At last a white smoke appeared at the sides of the yacht.

'They've seen us!' cried Glenarvan. 'It's the *Duncan's* signal gun.'

And a few seconds later an explosion died away on the shore, at once the *Duncan* moved nearer the coast, and soon, through the telescope, they saw a boat lowered.

'Lady Glenarvan can't come,' Tom Austin explained, 'there's too much sea on.'

'Nor Mr. Mangles,' added MacNabbs, 'he cannot leave his ship.'

'My sister! my sister!' exclaimed Robert, stretching out his arms towards the ship as she pitched violently.

'Oh, I do wish I were on board!' cried Glenarvan.

'Patience, Edward, you'll be there in two hours,' the major answered.

The six-oared boat could not cover the distance more quickly. Then Glenarvan went up to Thalcave, who was standing with folded arms near Thaouka, looking tranquilly at the dancing waves. He took the Indian's hand, pointed to the yacht and said, 'come.'

The Indian gently shook his head.

'Come, friend,' Glenarvan urged him.

'No,' Thalcave replied gently. 'Thaouka is here, and there

lie the Pampas,' he added, pointing with a passionate gesture to the immense plains.

Glenarvan realised that the Indian would never leave the prairie where lay the bones of his forefathers. He knew the religious attachment of these children of the desert for their native country; so he pressed Thalcave's hand, and did not insist further. Nor did he insist either when the Indian smilingly refused any reward for his help, merely replying, 'For friendship.'

Glenarvan could not answer him. He wished at least to leave the brave Indian some remembrance of his European friends; but he had nothing left. His weapons and horses had been lost in the flood; his friends were no richer than he. Then an idea came into his head; he drew from his portfolio a precious locket containing an admirable portrait, a masterpiece, and offered it to the Indian.

'My wife!' he explained.

Thalcave looked at the portrait with softening eyes, and uttered these simple words: 'Good and beautiful!'

Then Robert, Paganel, the major, Tom Austin, and the two sailors came with touching words to bid farewell to the brave Indian, and Paganel made him accept a map, which he had often looked at with interest, of South America and the two oceans; it was the most precious thing the savant possessed. Robert had only kisses to give, he gave them to the man who had saved him, nor was Thaouka forgotten.

Then the *Duncan*'s boat glided into a narrow creek between the banks, and touched the shore.

'My wife?' asked Glenarvan.

'My sister?' cried Robert.

'Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant are awaiting you on board,' the coxswain replied. 'But we have n't a minute to lose, your lordship, the ebb tide is just beginning.'

Thalcave accompanied his friends to the boat, and helped to push it off. As Robert was getting in, the Indian grasped his arm and looked at him tenderly.

'Now go,' he said, 'you are a man!'

'Good-bye, friend, goodbye!' Glenarvan repeated once more.

'Shall we never meet again?' cried Paganel.

'*Quién sabe?*' (Who knows?) the Indian answered, raising his arm towards the sky.

These were his last words, and were lost on the breeze as the boat was carried out by the tide and its oars. The motionless

figure of Thalcave appeared across the foam of the waves, then his great height seemed to get smaller, and he disappeared from the sight of his friends.

An hour later, Robert was the first to spring on the *Duncan*; he threw his arms round Mary Grant, whilst the crew of the yacht filled the air with joyful cheers.

Thus had their journey across South America been accomplished. Neither mountains nor rivers had made them deviate from their route; and although they had not encountered any danger from the ill-will of man, they had suffered much from the fury of the elements.

ON THE TRACK

CHAPTER I

BACK ON BOARD

'WHEN WE came back on board, dear Helena,' Lord Glenarvan explained to his young wife, 'I told you that, although we hadn't brought the shipwrecked men from the *Britannia* back with us, we've got greater hopes of eventually finding them. Our journey across America has convinced us that the catastrophe didn't take place either on the shores of the Pacific or of the Atlantic. Happily, our friend Paganel, was seized by a sudden inspiration and he's realised where we went wrong. He's shown us that we've been following a false trail, and he's interpreted the document we found in the bottle so as to leave no doubt in our minds. He's read a new meaning into the French part of the document, and he'll explain it to you.'

Paganel took the yellow piece of paper, upon which only a few syllables had remained, filling up the spaces, he now made it read :

'On the 7th of June, 1862, the ship *Britannia*, of Glasgow, went down, after a long agony, on the coasts of Australia. Captain Grant and two sailors landed on the continent, where they are prisoners of cruel natives. They threw this document in longitude — and latitude $37^{\circ} 11'$.'

When Paganel had read it, and explained why he interpreted it in this way, Glenarvan announced that the *Duncan* should immediately set sail for Australia. But before the order was given, Major MacNabbs asked to be allowed to make a simple comment.

'Speak, MacNabbs,' Glenarvan answered.

'What I want,' said the major, 'isn't to weaken the arguments of my friend Paganel, still less to refute them: I find them serious, wise, and worthy of all our attention, and they ought to form the basis of our future search. But I want them to be submitted to further examination, so that their value may be indisputable and undisputed.'

Nobody knew what the prudent MacNabbs was driving at, and his auditors listened to him in some anxiety.

'Go on, major,' Paganel replied. 'I'm ready to answer all your questions.'

'When, five months ago,' the major continued, 'we studied the three documents in the Firth of Clyde, their interpretation seemed self-evident. Nothing except the eastern coast of Patagonia could possibly have been the scene of the shipwreck. We hadn't even the shadow of a doubt on the subject.'

'That is true,' Glenarvan agreed.

'Later on,' continued the major, 'when Paganel, in a moment of providential distraction, came on board, the documents were submitted to him, and he approved, without reserve, of our search on the American continent.'

'I acknowledge it,' the geographer answered.

'And yet we were all mistaken,' the major pointed out.

'Yes, we were mistaken,' answered Paganel. 'But men are allowed mistakes, though only fools persist in them.'

'Wait a minute, Paganel,' the major told him, 'and do not excite yourself. I don't mean that we ought not to continue our search in America.'

'Then what do you want?' asked Glenarvan.

'The admission, nothing more, that Australia now appears to be the scene of the shipwreck of the *Britannia* on as good grounds as America did before.'

'We are quite ready to acknowledge it,' Paganel answered.

'And I make a note of this,' the major continued, 'and I take advantage of it to ask you not to believe too readily these successive and contradictory evidences. Who knows, if, after Australia, another country will not seem just as certain? And if, after a fresh search made in vain, whether it will not seem "evident" that we ought to begin again somewhere else?'

Glenarvan and Paganel looked at one another. The major's comments struck them as just.

'So I want,' MacNabbs continued, 'to have a map of the countries through which the thirtyseventh parallel runs, and to see if there isn't any other country which the document might indicate more clearly.'

'Nothing could be easier or quicker,' Paganel assured him, 'for, happily, land is not common under that latitude.'

The major unfolded an English planisphere, which showed the whole terrestrial globe according to Mercator's projection. It was

placed before Lady Glenarvan, and they all stood ready to follow Paganel's demonstration.

'As you see,' said the geographer, 'after crossing South America, the thirtyseventh degree of latitude passes Tristan da Cunha. Now I affirm that not one word in the document can refer to these islands.'

The documents were carefully examined, and all agreed that Paganel was right. Tristan d'Acunha was rejected unanimously.

'Getting out of the Atlantic,' the geographer continued, 'we pass two degrees below the Cape of Good Hope into the Indian Ocean. One group of islands is on our route, the Amsterdam Islands. Submit them to the same examination as Tristan da Cunha.'

After careful study the Amsterdam Islands were also rejected. No word, or portion of a word, in French, English, or German, could apply to this group in the Indian Ocean.

'Now we arrive at Australia,' continued Paganel; 'the thirty-seventh parallel meets this continent at Cape Bernouilli, and leaves it in Twofold Bay. You will agree with me that the word *stra* in the English document, and *austral* in the French, may apply to Australia. This is too clear to be insisted on.'

They all agreed with Paganel.

'Let us go on,' said the major.

'The journey is easy,' the geographer answered. 'Leaving Twofold Bay we cross the sea at the east of Australia, and meet with New Zealand, I must remind you that the word *contin* in the French document certainly indicates a continent, and New Zealand is only an island— or rather two islands. However, that may be, examine, compare, and see if the indications can possibly refer to those islands.'

'Not in any way,' answered John Mangles, after making careful examination of the documents and the planisphere.

'No,' agreed Paganel's audience, including the major himself, 'no, there can't be any question of New Zealand.'

'Now,' continued the geographer, 'on all this immense space, which separates New Zealand from the American coast, the thirtyseventh parallel only crosses one arid desert islet.'

'Called?' asked the major.

'Look at the map. It's the Maria Theresa, a name I can't find the slightest trace of in either of the three documents.'

'There is none,' Glenarvan agreed. 'So I leave you to decide if

all these probabilities, not to say certainties, aren't in favour of the Australian continent.'

The passengers and captain of the *Duncan* agreed that they did.

'Captain,' Glenarvan asked him, 'have you plenty of food and coal?'

'Yes, my lord I laid in a good stock at Talcahuano; and besides, we can touch at Cape Town for coal.'

'Will you let me make another comment?' the major asked Glenarvan.

'As many as you please, major.'

'Don't you think it would be wise to touch at the Tristán da Cunha and Amsterdam Islands for a few days? Then we could find out if the *Britannia* had left any trace of her being shipwrecked there.'

'Incredulous major,' cried Paganel

'I don't want us to have to retrace our steps if Australia shouldn't realise our hopes.'

'The precaution seems worth while,' answered Glenarvan

'And I certainly won't dissuade you from taking it,' agreed Paganel; 'on the contrary'

'Then, John,' Glenarvan gave the orders, 'make for Tristán da Cunha Island'

'This instant, my lord,' the captain answered and he went up on deck, while Mary and Robert Giant tried to thank their benefactor

The *Duncan* was soon sailing away from the American coast, and rapidly cleaving with her prow the waves of the Atlantic Ocean.

CHAPTER II

TRISTAN DA CUNHA

ALONG THE thirtyseventh parallel the distance from America to Australia is 9,480 miles. To the coast of America to Tristan da Cunha it is only 2,100 miles, a distance which John Mangles hoped to cover in ten days, if the east winds did not delay them. That very evening the wind lulled and the *Duncan* could display all her incomparable qualities on a calm sea.

The passengers had resumed their usual life. After the waves of the Pacific those of the Atlantic stretched before them, and except for variations in their colour, all waves are very much alike. The journey was made rapidly, and without incident or accident. Probabilities changed to certainties in the passengers' minds and they spoke of Captain Grant as if the yacht were to pick him up in some agreed port. His cabin was got ready, and it gave Mary Grant much happiness to carry out this task.

The learned geographer kept almost constantly shut up in his cabin. He was working night and day at a book entitled '*Sublime Impressions of a Geographer in the Argentine Prairies*', and the others could hear him reading his elegant periods before confiding them to the blank pages of his book. More than once, faithless to Clio, the muse of history, he invoked divine Calliope, who presides over epic works. Nor did he hide his light under a bushel, and Lady Glenarvan paid him her sincerest compliments. The major congratulated him on his mythological visitors.

'But no absence of mind, Pagancil!' he added. 'If the fancy takes you to learn Australian, don't study it in a Chinese grammar.'

He was referring to the absent-minded savant's having learnt Portuguese when he thought he was learning Spanish.

Lord and Lady Glenarvan were watching John Mangles and Mary Grant with keen interest. They saw nothing they could object to, and, as John did not speak, they deemed it better to take no notice.

'What will Captain Grant think about it?' Glenarvan asked his wife.

'He will think that John is worthy of Mary, Edward, and he won't be mistaken.'

Meantime, the yacht was making rapidly for her destination. Five days after losing sight of Cape Corrientes, on 16th November, the wind sprang up in the west, that wind so convenient for ships doubling the Cape of Good Hope against the regular winds from the south-east. The captain put on all sail, and the yacht flew along as if she were competing in one of the Royal Thames Club races.

The next day the ocean looked like a vast pond, choked with weeds. The *Duncan* seemed to be gliding over a long prairie, which Paganel justly compared to the Pampas, and this somewhat delayed her. Twenty-four hours later at daybreak, the man at the mast-head shouted—

'Land ahead!'

At this cry, always exciting, the deck filled with people. Soon a telescope issued from the companion-ladder, to be followed by Jacques Paganel. The savant pointed his telescope in the direction indicated, but could see nothing resembling land.

'Look in the clouds,' said Mangles suggested.

'I can see it now' agreed Paganel, 'it looks like a sort of imperceptible peak.'

'That's Tristan da Cunha.'

'Then, if I remember rightly,' replied the savant, 'we must be eighty miles off, for that's the distance at which the peak of Tristan, 7,000 feet high, is visible.'

'Precisely,' answered Mangles.

A few hours later, the group of very high and very steep islands was completely visible on the horizon and the conical peak of Tristan stood out black against the sky streaked with the rays of the rising sun. Soon the main island emerged from the rocky mass at the tip of a triangle, inclined towards the north east.

Lord Glenarvan was received by a governor sent out by Cape Colony, and he at once made enquiries about Captain Grant and the *Britannia*. Their names were entirely unknown. Tristan da Cunha being out of the way of shipping, and very little frequented. He had not expected to receive more precise information, and had only asked as a duty. To make sure, he even sent his boats round the island, whose circumference is only seventeen miles, while his passengers explored the town and its neighbourhood.

As the boats returned to the yacht, Lord Glenarvan went back

on board. They had only taken a few hours to go round the island, and they had met with no trace of the *Britannia*, so that this visit had no other result than that of definitely eliminating the island from the list of places to investigate.

At eight everybody was back on board, and in the night the *Duncan* left Tristan da Cunha, to see it no more.

CHAPTER III

AMSTERDAM ISLAND

AS JOHN MANGLES meant to put in at Cape Town for coal, he had to leave the thirty-seventh parallel, and go two degrees farther north. This took the *Duncan* out of the zone of the trade-winds, and among west winds very favourable for her voyage. In less than six days she cleared the 1,3000 miles which separated Tristan da Cunha from the Cape of Good Hope. On 24th November, at three in the afternoon, Table Mountain was sighted, and afterwards Signal Mountain, at the entrance to the bay. At eight Mangles anchored in Cape Town Harbour.

Paganel, as a member of the Geographical Society, could not be unaware that South Africa was seen for the first time in 1486 by the Portuguese Admiral Bartholomew Diaz, but not doubled until 1497 by the celebrated Vasco de Gama. And how could he fail to know of this, when Camoens had sung the glory of the great navigator in his *Lusiad*? But upon this point he made a surprising comment--that if Diaz had doubled the Cape of Good Hope in 1486, the discovery of America would have been put off indefinitely. For all that Columbus was looking for was the shortest route to the East Indies, and this was certainly by way of the Cape. Had this been doubled, he would have had no motive for his expedition, and would probably never have undertaken it.

Cape Town, founded in 1652 by the Dutchman Van Riebeck, was the capital of an important colony, which became decidedly English after the treaties of 1815. The passengers of the *Duncan* had twelve hours in which to make its acquaintance, for one day was enough for Mangles to renew his supplies, and he wanted to set sail again early on the morning of the 26th.

There were 2,900 miles to clear between the Cape and Amsterdam Island. If the wind and sea were favourable, it would take ten days, and they had no cause to complain of the elements.

'Ah! The seal! The seal!' exclaimed Paganel. 'Think of what we owe it! If the globe had been nothing but an immense continent, not the thousandth part of it would be known in the nineteenth century. See what happens in the interior of great continents! In the steppes of Siberia, the plains of Central Asia, the

deserts of Africa, the prairies of America, the vast lands of Australia, the glacial solitudes of the poles, men dare scarcely venture, the boldest draw back, the most courageous succumb. Twenty miles of desert separate men more effectually than five hundred miles of ocean. People are neighbours from one coast to another; strangers if separated only by a forest. England is near Australia, whilst Egypt seems to be millions of miles from Senegal and Pekin might be the antipodes of Saint Petersburg. The sea now-a-days is crossed more easily than the smallest desert; and it is thanks to the sea, as an American savant has justly said, that universal relationship has been established between all parts of the world.'

Paganel spoke with warmth, and even the major himself did not find fault with a word in this panegyric of the ocean. If, to find Captain Grant, they had to follow the thirtyseventh parallel across a continent, the enterprise would never have been attempted; but the sea was there to transport the courageous adventurers from one land to another, and on 6th September, at daybreak, it let a new mountain emerge from its waves.

It was Amsterdam Island, situated in longitude $77^{\circ} 24'$ and latitude $37^{\circ} 47'$; in clear weather its peak is visible fifty miles off. At eight it looked like the peak of Teneriffe.

'And so, it resembles Tristan da Cunha.'

'Justly concluded,' answered Paganel, 'according to the geometrical axiom, that two islands that are like a third are like each other. I may add that, like Tristan da Cunha, Amsterdam Island is rich in seals and Crusoes.'

'There are Crusoes ev'rywhere, then?' asked Lady Glenarvan.

'I know very few islands that have not had adventures of that kind, and your Defoe's novel had often been enacted before he wrote it.'

'Mr. Paganel,' said Mary Grant, 'will you let me ask you a question?'

'Two if you like, and I promise to answer them.'

'Would you be very much frightened at the idea of being abandoned on a desert island?'

'Come, Paganel,' the major added, 'aren't you going to admit that it's your dearest wish?'

'No, I won't admit that,' replied the geographer; 'yet I shouldn't dislike the adventure. I should make a new life for myself. I should hunt and fish, live in a cave in the winter, on a tree

in the summer; I should have store-houses for my grain, and, in short, I should colonise my island.'

'What, all by yourself?'

'Yes, all by myself, if necessary. Besides, I could tame animals—a young kid, an eloquent parrot, or an amiable monkey. And if accident sent me a companion like the faithful Friday, what more could I desire to make me happy? Suppose the major and I—'

'Thanks,' the major answered, 'I have no desire to play the part of a Crusoe, and I should do it very badly.'

'Your imagination is running away with you again, M. Paganel,' Lady Glenarvan warned him; 'but I believe the reality is something very different. You're only thinking of imaginary Crusoes, carefully thrown upon a well selected island. You see only the bright side of things.'

'Don't you think it possible to be happy in a desert island, then?'

'No, I do not. Man is made for society, not isolation. Solitude can only engender despair. The need to think of the material things of life might distract the unhappy man at first. But afterwards, when he realises the extent of his solitude, he must suffer torments.'

Paganel gave in, not without regret, to Lady Glenarvan's arguments, and the conversation on the relative advantages of solitude and society went on till the *Duncan* anchored a mile from the shore of Amsterdam Island. This group, isolated in the Indian Ocean, really consists of two distinct islands about thirty three miles apart, south of India; that on the north is Amsterdam, or Saint Peter, and the one on the south Saint Paul; but they have often been mistaken for one another by geographers and navigators.

These islands were discovered in December, 1796, by the Dutchman, Vlaming. In 1859 the officers of the Austrian frigate *Nova a*, in her circumnavigation, avoided committing the error of mistaking the two islands, and Paganel much wished to verify that Saint Paul, south of Amsterdam Island, is only an uninhabited islet, a conical mountain, which must formerly have been a volcano. Amsterdam Island, to which the yacht was carrying her passengers, is about twelve miles round and is inhabited by voluntary exiles, who have grown accustomed to their dull existence.

This island was to become and remain French.

When the *Duncan* reached it on 6th December, 1864, its popu-

lation numbered three inhabitants—one Frenchman and two mulattos, so that Paganel could shake hands with a countryman in the person of M. Viot, then extremely old. This patriarch did the honours of his island with much politeness: it was a happy day for him, as Saint Peter is frequented only by seal-fishers or whalers. He introduced his subjects, the two mulattos; they formed the whole population of the island. Their little house was situated on a natural port to the south-west, formed by the collapse of part of the mountain.

M. Viot had heard of no shipwreck, nor seen any traces of one. Glenarvan was neither surprised nor saddened by his answer. He had wished to make certain that Captain Grant was not there, though he had not the least expectation of finding him. The departure of the *Duncan* was, therefore, fixed for the next day.

Until evening the passengers went about the island, which has an attractive appearance; but neither its fauna nor flora would have filled the note book of the most prolix of naturalists. A few wild boars, petrels, albatross, perches, and seals, comprised the live stock. Thermal waters and ferruginous springs escaped, here and there, from the blackish ground, and threw their thick vapours above the volcanic soil. Some of these springs had a very high temperature, and when Mangles plunged a Fahrenheit thermometer into one it registered 176°. Fish taken in the sea a few paces from the spring were cooked in it in five minutes, and this decided Paganel not to bathe in it.

Towards evening, after a good walk, Glenarvan bade adieu to M. Viot. Everyone wished the patriarch the greatest happiness possible on his desert islet and he wished all success to the expedition. Thereupon the passengers embarked.

THE WAGER

ON 7TH DECEMBER, at three in the morning, the *Duncan* set sail again, and when the passengers came up on deck at eight Amsterdam Island was disappearing on the horizon. Three thousand miles separated the vessel from the Australian coast, and if the west wind would hold for another twelve days she would reach her destination.

Mangles pointed out to Mary Grant the different currents shown on the maps, and explained their direction. One, which crosses the Indian Ocean, bears upon the Australian continent, and its action from west to east is felt in the Pacific no less than in the Atlantic. If the *Britannia* had been stripped of her masts and rudder—disarmed against the violence of the sea and sky—she must have run upon the coast.

Still, however, one difficulty presented itself: according to the *Mercantile and Shipping Gazette*, the last news of Captain Grant had come from Callao on 30th May. How could the *Britannia* be in the Indian Ocean on 7th June, only a week after leaving the coast of Peru? This difficulty was raised one day when all the passengers were on the poop. Paganel at once went to examine the document, and when he came back he shrugged his shoulders.

'Well, Paganel, will you answer that?' Glenarvan challenged him.

'No,' answered Paganel; 'I'll only ask Captain Mangles one question. Can a good ship go along our route from America to Australia in a month?'

'Yes, if she makes two hundred miles in twenty-four hours.'

'Is that speed extraordinary?'

'No; clippers often go faster than that.'

'Well,' continued Paganel, 'instead of reading June seventh on the document, let us suppose that the sea has obliterated one figure, and read "June seventeenth or twenty seventh." From May thirty-first to June twenty-seventh, Captain Grant might have reached the Indian Ocean.'

Paganel's idea was received with much satisfaction.

'Another point cleared up,' said Glenarvan, 'and thanks to our friend. Now we have only to seek traces of the *Britannia* on the west coast of Australia.'

'Or on the east coast,' said Mangles.

'Yes, you are right, John, nothing in the documents indicates whether the disaster occurred on the western shores rather than on the eastern.'

'If Captain Grant was wrecked on the eastern shores of Australia,' John Mangles pointed out, 'he would have found help almost at once. All the shore is English, and peopled with colonies. The crew of the *Britannia* would not have had ten miles to go before meeting with countrymen.'

'Yes, captain,' Paganel agreed. 'At Twofold Bay and Eden Town, on the eastern coast, Captain Grant would not only have received shelter in an English colony, but would also have found means of transport to Europe.'

'Then,' asked Lady Glenarvan, 'the shipwrecked men would not have found the same help on that part of Australia to which the *Duncan* is taking us?'

'No,' answered Paganel. 'it's a desert coast, and there's no communication between it and Melbourne or Adelaide. If the *Britannia* had been wrecked among its breakers, all rescue would have failed her as completely as upon the inhospitable shores of Africa.'

'But what can have become of my father for the last two years?' said Mary Grant.

'He has either reached the English colonies, or fallen into the hands of the natives, or lost himself in the vast solitudes of Australia. If he had reached the English colonies, he would also have reached the good town of Dundee long ago; so he must either be a prisoner of the natives or —'

'But what sort of people are these natives?' asked Lady Glenarvan.

'They're the lowest type of humanity,' answered the savant; 'but they're not bloodthirsty like their neighbours of New Zealand. If they've made the captain and his sailors prisoners, they have not threatened their life, you may rest assured of that. All travellers are unanimous in saying that the Australians have a horror of bloodshed, and have many times been faithful allies against the cruel gangs of convicts.'

'You hear what M. Paganel says, Mary?' Lady Glenarvan

turned to the young girl. 'If your father is in the hands of the natives, we shall find him again.'

'And if he's lost in that immense country?' Mary turned to Paganel for an answer.

'Well,' the geographer replied confidently, 'we shall still find him. Shan't we, my friends?'

'Certainly,' Glenarvan wished to give a less depressing tone to the conversation. 'I won't accept the chance of his being lost.'

'Nor I either,' agreed Paganel.

'Is Australia large?' asked Robert.

'It's about as large as four-fifths of Europe, my boy; but, although it's large enough to be called a continent, very few travellers have been lost within it. I believe Leichardt is the only one whose fate is unknown, and I was informed through the Geographical Society, some time before my departure, that MacIntyre believed himself to be on his track.'

'Isn't the whole of Australia known, then?' asked Lady Glenarvan.

'Oh no, not by a great deal,' answered Paganel. 'This continent is not known any better than the interior of Africa, but not for want of enterprising travellers. From sixteen hundred and six to eighteen sixtytwo more than fifty men have worked at Australian exploration on the coast as well as in the interior.'

'Fifty!' the major seemed doubtful.

'Yes, quite as many as that, major. I mean sailors who have charted the outlines of the coast as well as travellers who journeyed into the interior.'

'Even then fifty is a large number.'

'I will even say more, MacNabbs,' the geographer was always excited by contradiction. 'If you challenge me, I'll quote fifty names without hesitation. Will you bet me your best rifle against my telescope?'

'Why not, Paganel, if that will give you any pleasure?'

'Then, major, you will kill no more chamois or foxes with that rifle unless I lend it to you, which I shall always have much pleasure in doing.'

'Paganel,' the major replied seriously, 'when you want my telescope, it will always be at your service.'

'I will begin, then,' said Paganel. 'Ladies and gentlemen, you must be the audience, and Robert, you must count the names. Two hundred and fifty-eight years ago, my friends, Australia was

still unknown. The existence of a large southern continent was suspected, and two maps kept in the library of your British Museum, dated fifteen-fifty, mention a land to the south of Asia, which they call the Great Java of the Portuguese. But these maps are not authentic enough.'

Paganel went on to mention the navigators from Holland who had reached the shores of Australia. By the middle of the seventeenth century it had been circumnavigated.

'And' he added, 'the name of New Holland, which it was not to keep, was given to the large southern island when the role of the Dutch navigators ended. What number are we at now?'

'Ten,' answered Robert.

'I now come to Englishmen,' said Paganel, 'In sixteen eighty-six, William Dampier, the celebrated buccaneer, reached the N.W. coast of New Zealand, latitude sixteen fifty; got in touch with the natives, and described them. After a long lapse of time came the greatest navigator of the world, Captain Cook, in seventeen seventy, and after that emigrants from Europe. He gave its name to Botany Bay because he found its shores so rich in new plants. It was his companion Banks who first suggested to the English Government the idea of sending convicts there. After Cook came navigators from all nations.'

Then Paganel went on with his list. 'And' he said, 'there was Flanders in eighteen hundred and one, who met in Encounter Bay two French vessels, commanded by Baudin and Hamelin—'

'Captain Baudin?' interrupted the major.

'Yes, why?'

'Oh, nothing; go on.'

'Then there was Captain King.'

'That makes twenty four names,' said Robert.

'Good; I have half the major's rifle already. And now I have done with sailors, and pass to land traellers.'

He continued with a list of those explorers who had penetrated inland, until at last there came an interruption:

'Fifty-six!' cried Robert.

'I have given you good measure, major.' Paganel pointed out, 'for I have quoted neither Duperrey, nor Bougainville, nor Fitz-Roy, nor Wickham, nor Stokes—'

'Hold, enough!' cried the major.

'Stop, Paganel,' Glenarvan laughed heartily, 'don't overwhelm the poor fellow. Be generous! He admits himself beaten.'

'And his rifle?' asked the geographer in triumph.

'It is yours, Paganel,' answered the major, 'and I regret it very much. But you have memory enough to win a whole museum of artillery. But, perhaps you don't know everything relating to the discovery of Australia.'

'If you can tell me anything I don't know, I'll give you back your rifle, MacNabbs.'

'Well, do you know why Australia doesn't belong to France, or rather the reason the English give?

'No, major,' said Paganel, looking vexed.

'It is simply because Captain Baudin, though not a timid man, was so frightened by the croaking of the Australian frogs, that he weighed anchor as soon as possible, and fled, never to return.'

'Why, the English call us "frog-eaters"! People aren't generally afraid of what they eat.'

'That is what they say, at all events,' the major insisted.

And that is how the famous rifle stayed in Major MacNabbs' possession!

CHAPTER V

CAPE BERNOUILLI

DURING THE remainder of her journey, which was very stormy, the *Duncan* deviated but slightly from her route. Captain Mangles anchored on the west coast of Australia in longitude $136^{\circ} 12'$ and latitude $35^{\circ} 07'$, at Cape Catastrophe 300 miles from Cape Bernouilli and not very far from Adelaide.

The *Duncan* had sustained some damage to her screw, which could not be repaired at Adelaide, so that Glenarvan and the captain decided that she should sail round the Australian coast looking for traces of the *Britannia*, she should stop at Cape Bernouilli to seek information, and then go on to Melbourne, where the damage could be repaired. This done, she should cruise along the eastern coast.

The captain profited by the first fair wind to start, and two hours later he had lost sight of Cape Catastrophe. The same evening Cape Borda was doubled, and Kangaroo Island was passed—this is the largest of the smaller Australian islands, and when it was discovered in 1802, innumerable kangaroos had been bounding through its woods and across its plains. Next day, the *Duncan*'s boats were sent to visit the coast to obtain information; she was then on the 36th Parallel, and Glenarvan wished to leave no point unexplored as far as the 38th.

Throughout this navigation the boats were of great service. The sailors did not complain, and Glenarvan, with his inseparable companion Paganel, and young Robert almost always accompanied them, wishing to seek for traces of the *Britannia* with their own eyes. The Australian shores were as mute on the subject as those of Patagonia. However, until they reached the exact point indicated in the document, they would still be hopeful.

It was on 20th December that they arrived at Cape Bernouilli, without having met with the smallest success. In fact, in two years no remains of the *Britannia* would have been left, for the natives would have taken what the sea had spared. So, Harry Grant and his two companions, made prisoners the moment the waves had thrown them on to the coast, had no doubt been carried into the interior.

But then one of Paganel's ingenious hypotheses fell to the ground. As long as the Argentine territory was in question, the geographer could assert that the indications on the document related not to the scene of shipwreck but to the place of their captivity, for the large Pampas rivers were there to carry the precious message to the sea. Here, on the contrary, in this part of Australia, very few water-courses cross the 37th parallel; what is more, the Rio Colorado and the Rio Negro flow towards the sea across desert places, uninhabitable and uninhabited, whilst the principal Australian rivers, including the Murray, Torrens, and the Darling, either flow into one another, or into the ocean through mouths which have become busy roadsteads, ports where navigation is active. What probability was there, that a fragile bottle could float down these rivers as far as the Indian Ocean without being either destroyed or seen?

Paganel recognised the difficulty during a discussion raised on the subject by Major MacNabbs. It became clear that the indications given by the document must relate only to the scene of the wreck, and that the bottle had been thrown into the sea at once. If no traces of the *Britannia* could be met with at Cape Bernouilli, Lord Glenarvan could do nothing but to return to Europe. His search would have been fruitless, but he would have fulfilled his duty courageously and conscientiously.

This thought saddened the passengers of the yacht and plunged Mary and Robert Grant into despair. As they went ashore with Lord and Lady Glenarvan, John Mangles, MacNabbs, and Paganel, the two children knew that their father's fate was to be decided irrevocably; for had not Paganel, in their earlier discussion, demonstrated that, if the ship had been wrecked on the east coast, the captain would have reached home long ago?

'There's still hope,' Lady Glenarvan encouraged the girl who was seated beside her in the boat. 'God's hand will not fail us!'

'Yes, Miss Grant,' said the captain, 'when men have exhausted all human resources, then Heaven intervenes, and opens up fresh paths by some unforeseen event.'

The boat touched land in a little natural creek between coral banks still in process of formation; these in time would form a line of breakers on the south coast of Australia. Even now, they could already destroy a ship, and the *Britannia* might have been wrecked upon them.

The passengers disembarked with difficulty upon a desert coast. Cliffs formed a coast-line sixty to eighty feet high, and it would

have been difficult to scale these natural ramparts without either ladders or climbing-gear. Happily, half a mile further south, John Mangels discovered a gap formed by a partial collapse of the cliff. The sea had doubtless smashed down the friable rock during its great equinoctial attacks of anger, and thus brought about its collapse.

Glenarvan and his companions reached the top after a rather steep ascent. Robert climbed like a cat and arrived first, to the despair of Paganel, who was humiliated at seeing his long legs of forty vanquished by short legs of twelve. The travellers were soon reunited and they scanned the plain which stretched before them. It was a vast uncultivated district, which Glenarvan compared to the glens of the Scottish Lowlands, and Paganel to the unfertile lands of Brittany. But, although this country seemed to be uninhabited along the coast, the presence of man revealed itself in the distance. *

'A mill!' cried Robert.

The sails of a windmill were indeed turning in the wind three miles off.

'Yes, it is a mill.' Paganel had just scrutinised it through his field-glass.

'We'll go to it,' replied Glenarvan.

After half an hour's walk, the ground changed abruptly from barren to cultivated country. Hedges surrounded freshly-enclosed fields; a few oxen, and half a dozen horses, were pasturing in the meadows, surrounded by robust acacias from the vast woods of Kangaroo Island. Little by little appeared fields covered with cereals, acres of ground bristling with yellow ears, haystacks raised up like vast beehives, orchards, fine gardens worthy of Horace, outbuildings, and at last a simple comfortable house overlooked by the mill, and caressed by the moving shadow of its large sails.

At that moment a man of about 'fty, of a prepossessing appearance, came out of the principal building, as four large dogs barked at the strangers. Five strong and handsome boys, his sons, followed him with their mother, a tall robust woman. Glenarvan saw at once that these were an emigrant Irishman and his family. He had no time to speak before the man said—'Strangers, welcome to the house of Paddy O'Moore.'

'Are you Irish?' Glenarvan took the hand the colonist offered.

'I was,' Paddy answered, 'but now I'm Australian. Come in, gentlemen; whoever you are, you're at home here.'

There was nothing for it but to accept so graceful an invita-

tion without standing on ceremony. Lady Glenarvan and Mary Grant, led by Mrs. O'Moore, entered first, whilst the sons of the colonist relieved their visitors of their weapons.

A vast room, cool and light, occupied the ground floor of the house, constructed of stout horizontal joists. A few wooden forms, nailed to the gaily painted walls, a dozen stools, two oak dressers, on which shone white china and tin cooking utensils, a long wide table, at which twenty people could comfortably seat themselves, formed the furniture worthy of the strongly built house and its robust inhabitants.

The mid day meal was on the table. A soup tureen was smoking between a gigantic piece of roast beef and a leg of mutton, surrounded by large plates of olives, grapes, and oranges. The host seemed so engaging, the table looked so tempting and so abundantly spread, that it would have been rude not to accept. The stockmen, their master's equals, had already come to share in their repast. Paddy O'Moore pointed to the place reserved for strangers.

'I expected you,' was all he said to Lord Glenarvan.

'You expected us!' was the astonished answer.

'I always expect strangers,' the Irishman assured him.

Then, in a grave voice, whilst his family and stockmen stood respectfully, he said grace. Lady Glenarvan felt touched at such perfect simplicity of manners, and a look from her husband told her that he admired it no less.

While they were eating, Paddy O'Moore told his story. It was that of all emigrants whom poverty drives from their native land. Many come to seek a fortune, and meet with misfortune, only to accuse fate instead of their own lack of intelligence, their idleness, and vice. The sober and courageous, the economical and brave, always succeed.

Such had been, and such was, Paddy O'Moore. He had left Dundalk, where he was dying of hunger, and went to Australia; disembarked at Adelaide, he had begun his career of agriculturist, to which he owed his present prosperity. All the territory of South Australia is divided into portions of 30 acres. These different lots are ceded to the colonists by the Government, and on each lot a hard working agriculturist can earn enough to live on and put aside a nett sum of money.

Paddy O'Moore knew this. He lived, economised, acquired fresh land with the profits of the first. His family and farm both prospered, and the erstwhile Irish peasant became a landed pro-

prietor, and, although his farm was only two years old, he already owned 500 acres of soil reclaimed by his own labour, and 500 head of cattle. He was his own master after being a slave in Europe, and as independent as he could be in the freest country in the world.

When Paddy O'Moore's story was told, he doubtless expected confidence for confidence, but he did not ask for it. He was one of those discreet people who say, 'That is what I am, but I do not ask what you are.'

Glenarvan had an immediate interest in speaking of the *Duncan*, in explaining his presence at Cape Bernouilli, and the search which he was pursuing with indefatigable perseverance; like a man who goes straight to his point, he asked Paddy O'Moore about the shipwreck of the *Britannia*. The Irishman's answer was not helpful. He had never heard about the ship. For the last two years no ship had been lost on that coast either above or below the Cape.

'Now, my lord,' added he, 'may I ask you what reason you have for asking me that question?'

Then Glenarvan told the colonist the history of the document, the voyage, and all they had done to find Captain Grant; he did not hide that his dearest hopes had fallen before such precise information, and that now he despaired of ever finding the shipwrecked mariners again. Such words could not but produce a painful impression on Glenarvan's audience. The eyes of Mary and Robert filled with tears as they listened. Paganel did not find a word of consolation or hope, and John Mangles suffered at seeing a grief which he could not assuage. Despair had taken possession of the generous men whom the *Duncan* had brought in vain to these far-off coasts when these words were heard.

'My lord, praise and bless God. If Captain Grant is alive, he is on Australian soil! '

CHAPTER VI

AYRTON

IT WOULD be impossible to depict the surprise that these words produced. Glenarvan jumped up and pushed back his chair.

'Who spoke?' he asked.

'I did,' replied one of the stockmen seated at the end of the table.

'You, Ayrton?' said O'Moore, no less astonished than Glenarvan.

'Yes,' answered Ayrton, in a firm voice. 'I, a Scotsman like you, my lord, and one of the shipwrecked men from the *Britannia*.'

This declaration produced an indescribable effect. Mary Giant nearly fainted with emotion, whilst John Mangles, Robert, and Paganel left their places and crowded round him whom Paddy O'Moore had called Ayrton.

He was a man of forty-five, of coarse features, whose brilliant eyes were hidden under bushy eyebrows. He was thin, but looked strong. He was all bones and muscles, and had never wasted his time making fat. Middle weight, broad shoulders, decided manner, a face full of intelligence and energy, all prepossessed in his favour. The sympathy he inspired was increased by the traces of recent sorrow imprinted on his face. They saw that he had suffered, and suffered much, although he looked like a man who could bear suffering and conquer it. The travellers felt that at first sight, Glenarvan began to question him, their meeting had evidently produced a reciprocal emotion in both of them.

'Were you wrecked in the *Britannia*?' asked Lord Glenarvan.

'Yes, my lord; I was quartermaster under Captain Giant,' answered Ayrton.

'Were you saved with him after the shipwreck?'

'No, my lord, no. I was swept off the deck and carried to the shore.'

'Then you aren't one of the two sailors mentioned in the document?'

'No; I didn't know of the existence of this document. I

thought that Captain Grant was drowned, and that I was the only survivor.'

'But you said Captain Grant was alive.'

'No; I said if Captain Grant is alive—'

'And you added, he's on the Australian continent.'

'Yes, he cannot be anywhere else.'

'Where did the shipwreck take place, then?' said Major MacNabbs.

That ought to have been the first question; but in the confusion, Glenarvan, who was in a hurry to know where Captain Grant was, had forgot then to ask where the *Britannia* had been lost.

'When I was swept off the deck,' answered Ayrton, 'the *Britannia* was running on to the Australian coast. It was not two cables off. The shipwreck must have happened then.'

'In what latitude?' asked Mangles.

'Thirty-seven degrees,' answered Ayrton.

'On the west coast?'

'No, on the east,' answered Ayrton, quickly.

'On what date?'

'On the night of June twenty-seventh, eighteen sixtytwo.'

'The very same!' cried Glenarvan.

'You see, my lord,' added Ayrton, 'that I could rightly say that if Captain Grant is still alive, he must be sought for on the Australian continent, and nowhere else.'

'And we will seek him, and find him, and save him!' cried Paganel. 'Ah! precious document!' he added, with perfect *naïveté*, 'you fell into good hands.'

No one heard Paganel's flattering words; they were all shaking hands with Ayrton. It seemed as though the presence of this man were a certain warrant of Captain Grant's safety. Why could not the captain have escaped as well as the sailor? Ayrton replied with remarkable intelligence and precision to the thousand questions with which he was assailed. Whilst he was talking, Mary Grant held one of his hands. This sailor had been one of her father's companions, had run the same dangers! Mary could not take her eyes off his rough face, and she wept with happiness.

Until now, no one had thought of doubting the veracity and identity of the quartermaster. The major, and perhaps John Mangles, were the only two who asked themselves if Ayrton deserved entire confidence. He had certainly quoted facts and dates which agreed in striking particulars. But, however exact, these

details did not prove the fact, and it is generally true that a lie is borne out by precision of details. So MacNabbs reserved his opinion and refrained from pronouncing it.

As to John Mangles, his doubts soon melted before the sailor's words, especially when he heard him talking to Mary about her father. Ayrton knew Mary and Robert quite well. He had seen them at Glasgow on the departure of the *Britannia*. He remembered their presence at the farewell dinner on board, at which the sheriff MacIntyre had presided. They had entrusted Robert, then scarcely ten years old, to the care of Dick Turner, the boatswain, and he had escaped and climbed to the gallant-sail.

'So I did! So I did!' cried Robert.

And Ayrton recalled a thousand little incidents, without appearing to attach the same importance to them as did John Mangles. When he paused, Mary said to him in her gentle voice: 'Talk to me again about my father, Mr. Ayrton.'

The quartermaster satisfied the desire of the young girl as well as he could. Glenarvan would not interrupt him, though he thought of a thousand useful questions; but Lady Glenarvan showed him Mary's joyful emotion, and stopped him. It was in this conversation that Ayrton recalled the story of the *Britannia* and her voyage across the Pacific. Mary Grant knew much of it, as she had received news from her father up to May, 1862.

During that period, when Captain Grant had touched at the New Hebrides, New Guinea, New Zealand, and New California, he had met with difficulties, both from its present owners, many of whom were little justified in being so, and from the English authorities, for his ship was known in the British colonies. But he had found an important point on the western coast of Papua; it seemed easy to establish a Scots colony there, and its prosperity seemed assured. In fact, a good port to put into on the route to the Moluccas and Phillipines was bound to attract ships—above all, when the piercing of the Isthmus of Suez should supplant the Cape route. Captain Grant predicted M. de Lesseps' success, and was not one of those who throw political rivalry across great international projects.

After reconnoitring Papua, the *Britannia* went to revictual at Callao, and she left this port on 30th May, 1862, to return to Europe by the Indian Ocean and the Cape route. Three weeks later a fearful tempest had assailed her. They had had to dismast her, she had sprung a leak, and the crew were worn out with constant work at the pumps. For one week the *Britannia*

was the plaything of the storms. She had six feet of water in her hold, and was gradually sinking, while the boats had been carried away by the tempest.

On the night of 22nd June they sighted the Australian coast. The ship was thrown on to the breakers with a violent shock, and Ayrton was washed off and lost consciousness. When he came to himself, he was in the hands of the natives, who dragged him into the interior of the continent. From that time he heard nothing more of the *Britannia*, and he had supposed, not without reason, that she and all on board had perished among the dangerous breakers of Twofold Bay. That was all Ayrton knew about Captain Grant, but his own history after the shipwreck might throw some light on the latter's fate. Thanks to the document, it could not be doubted that Grant and his two sailors had survived the shipwreck as Ayrton himself had done.

So Ayrton was asked to relate his own adventures. His tale was quite short and very simple: he had been carried away by a native tribe to the interior regions watered by the Darling—400 miles north of the 37th parallel. There he had lived very miserably, because the tribe was miserably poor, though he was not ill-treated, through two long years of painful slavery. However, he had always hoped to recover his liberty, and he watched for the least chance of escaping, although his flight must throw him amidst innumerable dangers.

One night in October, 1864, he had eluded the vigilance of the natives, and disappeared into the depths of the immense forests. For one month living on roots, edible ferns and the gum of mimosas, he had wandered amidst these vast solitudes, guiding himself by the sun by day and the stars by night. He had crossed marshes, rivers, mountains, all that uninhabited portion of the continent which a few travellers alone have visited. At last, half dead with exhaustion, he had reached the hospitable abode of Paddy O'Moore, where he had found a happy life in exchange for his work.

'And I'm glad mine was the first house he reached,' said the colonist. 'for he's proved an intelligent and industrious workman, and my house shall remain his as long as he pleases.'

Ayrton thanked the Irishman with a gesture, and waited for fresh questions, though he no doubt thought there could not be many more to ask. What could he answer henceforth except what he had said already?

Glenarvan was going to open a discussion as to what must be

done next, when the major asked: 'You were quartermaster on the *Britannia*?'

'Yes,' answered Ayrton, unhesitatingly. Then, realising that some slight doubt on the major's part must have dictated the question, he added, 'I saved my papers from the wreck, and I'll go and fetch them.'

His absence did not last a minute, but Paddy O'Moore had time to say: 'My lord, Ayrton is an honest man. During the two months he's been in my service I haven't had one complaint to make of him. He's told me all about his shipwreck and captivity before. I'm sure he's worthy of all your confidence.'

Glenarvan was going to reply that he had never doubted Ayrton's good faith, when the quartermaster entered with the paper. It was signed by the owners of the *Britannia* and Captain Grant; Mary Grant recognised her father's handwriting. Any doubt about Ayrton's identity was no longer possible.

'Now,' said Glenarvan, 'we must decide what's to be done next. Ayrton, your advice will be valuable, and I'll be greatly obliged to you for it.'

Ayrton reflected for some minutes, and then answered: 'I thank you, my lord, for the confidence you have in me, and I hope to show myself worthy of it. I have some knowledge of this country, and the customs of the natives, and if I can be of any use—'

'You certainly can,' answered Glenarvan.

'I think as you do,' Ayrton replied, 'that Captain Grant and two sailors escaped from the wreck; but as they never reached the English possessions, their fate must have been the same as mine, and that they're still prisoners of some native tribe.'

'You're only repeating some of my arguments,' said Paganel. 'They must be prisoners; but do you think that, like you, they've been carried north of the thirtyseventh parallel?'

'I expect so, sir; for the natives don't stay near the English districts.'

'How can we possibly find any traces of the prisoners in the interior of so vast a continent?' asked Glenarvan.

This question was followed by a prolonged silence. Lady Glenarvan questioned each of her companions with a look, but obtained no answer. Even Paganel was silent. His usual ingenuity had forsaken him. John Mangles walked up and down the room as if he were on the deck of his ship.

'And you, Mr. Ayrton,' added Lady Glenarvan, 'what would you do?'

'My lady,' Ayrton replied at once, 'I should re-embark, and take the *Duncan* to the place where the *Britannia* was wrecked. There I should consider circumstances, and any indications we might find.'

'Very well,' Glenarvan agreed; 'but we must wait till the *Duncan* is repaired.'

'Is she damaged, then?' asked Ayrton.

'Yes,' replied John Mangles.

'Much?'

'No; but we haven't got the tools we need on board. One of the blades of the propeller is strained, and it can only be repaired at Melbourne.'

'Can't you go under sail?' asked the quartermaster.

'Yes, but if the wind is at all contrary, we shall be a long time getting to Twofold Bay, and even then we shall have to return to Melbourne.'

'Well, let the ship go to Melbourne,' cried Paganel, 'and we'll go without her to Twofold Bay.'

'How shall we do that?' John Mangles wanted to know.

'By crossing Australia, just as we crossed America, along the thirtyseventh parallel.'

'But the *Duncan*?' Ayrton laid a peculiar emphasis on the word.

'The *Duncan* will join us, or we shall join the *Duncan*, as the case may be. If we find Captain Grant, we'll go to Melbourne with him. If we don't find him before we reach the coast, the *Duncan* must come to us. Who has any objections to this plan? Has the major?'

'No,' said MacNabbs, 'not if it's practicable.'

'So practicable,' answered Paganel, 'that I suggest that Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant should accompany us.'

'Are you speaking seriously, Paganel?' asked Lord Glenarvan.

'Very seriously, my lord. It is a journey of three hundred and fifty miles, no more. By going twelve miles a day we shall cover it in a month—the time needed to repair the *Duncan*. Ah! if it were a question of crossing the Australian continent under its lowest latitude, across its greatest width, through immense deserts, destitute of water, where the heat is torrid—in short, of doing what the boldest travellers have not yet undertaken, it would be a different thing. But this thirtyseventh parallel crosses

Victoria, as English a country as could be, with roads, railways, and people. You could do it in a carriage, or, what would be better still, in a cart. It's a journey from London to Edinburgh—nothing more.'

'But the wild animals?' Glenarvan wanted to raise all possible objections.

'There are no wild animals in Australia.'

'But the savages?'

'There are no savages in this latitude, and anyhow they aren't cruel like the New Zealanders.'

'But the convicts?'

'There are no convicts in the southern part of Australia, only in the eastern. Victoria has not only refused them, but has made a law to exclude the liberated felons of the other colonies from its territories. The Government of Victoria had this very year threatened to withdraw its subsidy from the Peninsula Company if its ships continue to coal in the ports of Western Australia, where convicts are admitted. What! you don't know that—you, an Englishman?'

'I am *not* an Englishman,' Glenarvan asserted.

'What Mr. Paganel says is perfectly right, then,' said Paddy O'Moore. 'Not only the Province of Victoria, but Southern Australia, Queensland, and even Tasmania, have agreed to keep convicts off their territory. Since I have been in this farm I haven't heard of any convicts.'

'For my part I never saw one,' Ayrton chimed in.

'You see, my friends,' Paganel continued, 'there are few savages, no wild animals, no malefactors. There are few European countries of which so much could be said. Well, is it agreed?'

'What do you say, Helena?' asked Lord Glenarvan.

'What we all do, Edward,' Lady Glenarvan turned to her companions; 'let's start at once.'

CHAPTER VII

SETTING OFF

GLENARVAN WAS not in the habit of losing any time between adopting an idea and carrying it out. Paganel's idea once decided upon, he at once gave orders for the preparations for the journey to be made with the briefest delay possible. The departure was fixed for the next day but one, 22nd December.

What would result from this journey? It merely increased the sum of favourable chances. None of them seriously expected to find the captain on the 37th parallel, which they were rigorously going to follow, but perhaps it would cross his trail, and, moreover, it led straight to the scene of the wreck. That was the main thing.

More, if Ayrton consented to accompany the travellers, to lead them across the forests of Victoria on to the eastern coast, that would give them a better chance of success. Glenarvan especially wanted to get his assistance, and asked his host if he would mind his suggesting it to Ayrton. Paddy O'Moore consented, not without regretting the loss of so excellent a stockman.

'Well, Ayrton, will you come with us on our expedition?' asked Glenarvan.

Ayrton did not answer at once; he seemed to hesitate for some minutes, and then said: 'Yes, my lord, I'll go with you; and if I can't put you on the track of Captain Grant, I can at least guide you to the place where the *Britannia* was lost.'

'Thank you, Ayrton,' replied Glenarvan.

'May I ask you one question, my lord.'

'Certainly.'

'Where shall you meet the *Duncan* again?'

'At Melbourne, if we don't have to cross Australia from one shore to the other; off the eastern coast if we do.'

'And the captain?'

'The captain will await my instructions at Melbourne.'

'Very well, my lord, you may count me.'

Glenarvan instructed Ayrton to arrange the means of transport for this journey across Australia, and then, after settling where to meet him, the passengers returned on board.

When John Mangles supported the suggestion, he had assumed that this time he should accompany the expedition. He begged it as a favour from Glenarvan, adducing all sorts of arguments: his devotion to Lady Glenarvan and his lordship himself, the use he could be in organising the caravan, his uselessness as captain on the *Duncan*—in short, a thousand excellent reasons except the best, of which Glenarvan did not need to be convinced.

'Do you feel complete confidence in your mate, John?' asked Glenarvan.

'Absolute,' Mangles assured him. 'Tom Austin is a good sailor. He'll take the *Duncan* to her destination, and have her repaired and ready by the day you name. Tom is a slave to duty and discipline. He will never take upon himself to alter or delay the execution of an order. Your lordship may depend upon him as much as you would upon me.'

'Then you may come, John,' answered Glenarvan, 'for,' he added smiling, 'of course you'd like to be with us if we find Mary's father.'

Mangles looked confused as he took Glenarvan's proffered hand.

Next day, accompanied by the ship's carpenter and the sailors, who were loaded with provisions, he returned to Paddy O'Moore's dwelling, to organise transport along with the Irishman. All the family awaited him, ready to work under his orders, and Ayrton was there to give them the benefit of his experience. Paddy agreed with him in deciding that the ladies should make the journey in an ox cart, and the men to go on horseback, and he was able to get the animals and the vehicle.

The vehicle was twenty feet long, and covered with a tarpaulin, it had four round wooden wheels and shafts twenty-five feet long, to which six pairs of oxen could be yoked. These animals drew with their head and neck, by the combination of a yoke fastened on their head, and a collar fastened to the yoke with an iron collar-pin. Great skill was required to conduct this long, narrow, swaying contrivance, and to urge on the team by means of a goad. But Ayrton had served his apprenticeship at the farm, and Paddy answered for his skill. To him was, therefore, assigned the task of driving.

The vehicle had no springs and was far from comfortable; but such as it was, they had to take it. As John Mangles could change nothing in its rude construction, he had the interior arranged as comfortably as possible. It was divided into two com-

partments: the back part to receive the provisions, luggage, and Olbinett's portable stove; the front set apart solely for the ladies. Under the carpenter's hand, this was transformed into a convenient room, covered with a thick carpet, and furnished with a toilet-table and two bedsteads, reserved for Lady Helena and Mary Grant. Thick leather curtains closed it when necessary, and protected it against the night air. In case of great rain, the men could take refuge in it, but a tent was to be their usual shelter in camp. John Mangles did his utmost to unite in the narrow space all that the two women required, and he succeeded. Lady Glenarvan and Mary Grant were not to regret, in their travelling room, the comfortable cabins of the *Duncan*.

It was easier to provide for the men; seven vigorous horses were procured for Lord Glenarvan, Paganel, Robert Grant, Mac Nabbs, John Mangles, and the two sailors, Wilson and Mulrady, who were to accompany their master in this new expedition. Ayton, of course, took his place on the driver's seat, and Olbinett, whom equitation tempted little, could put up with travelling in the luggage compartment. Horses and oxen were grazing in the meadows, and could easily be assembled when it was time to start. That settled, and his orders given to the ship's carpenter, John Mangles went on board with the Irish family and Ayton.

They were received with open arms. Glenarvan offered them dinner and his guests willingly accepted. Paddy was filled with admiring astonishment: the cabin furniture, the hangings, the maple and rosewood panelling, roused his admiration. Ayton, on the contrary, only gave a moderate approval to these costly superfluities, while he examined the yacht from a seaman's point of view; he visited the hold and the engine room; asked about the power of the engine and the fuel consumption; explored the coal bunkers, magazine room and steward's galley; and interested himself especially in the weapons and the forecastle cannon. Glenarvan had to do with a man who knew what he was about, as he could see by Ayton's questions, especially when he was examining the masts and rigging.

' You have a handsome ship here, n^t v 'old,' he commented.
' What is her tonnage? '

' Just over two hundred tons.'

' Shall I be far out if I guess her speed, with all steam on, at fifteen knots? ' Ayton enquired.

'Add two,' said Mangles, 'and you'll be right.'

'Seventeen!' exclaimed the quartermaster, 'then there is no warship—not even the best ever made—that could catch her.'

'Not one!' answered Mangles. 'The *Duncan* is a racing yacht, and couldn't be beaten anyhow'

'Not even under sail?' Ayrton wanted to know.

'No, not even then.'

'Well, my lord, and you, captain, replied Ayrton, 'let a sailor who knows a good ship when he sees her congratulate you.'

'Well, Ayrton,' Glenarvan pointed out, 'it only depends upon yourself whether she becomes your ship or no.'

'I'll think about it, my lord,' the quartermaster answered simply.

Mr. Olbinett came up at that moment to tell his lordship that dinner was ready, and Glenarvan and his guests went towards the saloon.

'An intelligent man, that Ayrton,' Paganel told the major.

'Too intelligent!' answered MacNabb, who, without the shadow of a reason, had taken a dislike to the quartermaster.

During dinner Ayrton gave many interesting details about the Australian continent, which he knew perfectly. He asked how many sailors Glenarvan meant to take with him in his expedition, and when he learned that only Mulrady and Wilson were going he seemed astonished. He tried to persuade Glenarvan to form his party of the best sailors of the *Duncan*, and insisted so much that it ought to have effaced all suspicion from the major's mind.

'But,' Glenarvan reminded him, 'our journey across South Australia involves no danger.'

'None,' Ayrton assured him.

'Then it's better to leave as many sailors as possible on board to handle the ship and for repairs. It's especially important that she should be punctual at our meeting place, so we'd better not weaken the crew.'

Ayrton seemed to understand Lord Glenarvan's standpoint, and did not insist.

When evening came, the Scots and the Irish separated, and Ayrton and Paddy O'Moore returned home. Horses and waggon were to be ready for the next morning, when the start was fixed for eight a.m.

Lady Glenarvan and Mary Grant then made their own final preparations. These were shorter and less minute than those of

Jacques Paganel, for the savant spent part of the night in unscrewing, wiping, and putting his telescope together again. He was still asleep when the major called him at daybreak.

John Mangles had already sent the luggage to the farm, and a boat was waiting for the travellers, who took their places in it. The young captain gave his last orders to Tom Austin, and instructed him especially to wait for Lord Glenarvan's orders at Melbourne, whatever they might be, he was to carry them out scrupulously. The old sailor answered that Mangles might depend upon him; then in the name of the crew he offered his lordship their best wishes for the success of the expedition. As the boat rowed off, the crew gave three cheers.

Ten minutes later it touched the shore, and in a quarter of an hour the travellers arrived at the farm. Everything was ready, and Lady Glenarvan was delighted with the arrangements of her compartment. The immense waggon, with its primitive wheels, also pleased her. Ayrton, goad in hand, was awaiting the driver of his new master.

'This is a splendid vehicle!' exclaimed Paganel, 'it's worth all the mail-coaches in the world. I know no better means of going about the world than in a house on wheels.'

'M. Paganel,' replied Lady Glenarvan, 'I hope to have the pleasure of receiving you in my salon.'

'I shall be delighted, madam. Which is your at home day?'

'I shall be at home every day for my friends,' Helena laughed, 'and you are—'

'The most devoted of all, madam,' the Frenchman answered gallantly.

This exchange of politeness was interrupted by the arrival of the seven horses all ready harnessed. Lord Glenarvan settled with the Irishman for his purchases, adding many thanks, which the good-hearted colonist valued as much as the money.

The signal for departure was given. Lady Glenarvan and Miss Giant took their places in their compartment, Ayrton on the driver's seat, Olbineut at the back of the waggon, Glenarvan, the major, Paganel, Robert, John Mangles, the two sailors, all armed with rifles and revolvers, mounted their horses. A 'God help you!' was said by Paddy O'Moore, and his family repeated it in chorus. Ayrton uttered a peculiar cry, and urged on his team. The waggon moved, and soon a turn of the road hid the hospitable farm of the worthy Irishman.

CHAPTER VIII

VICTORIA

IT WAS 23rd December, 1864. This month, so dull and damp in the northern hemisphere, ought to be called June in Australia. Astronomically, the summer was already two days old, for the sun had reached Capricorn on the 21st, and its stay above the horizon was already a few moments shorter. It was the warmest season of the year, and Lord Glenarvan's journey was to take place under the rays of almost a tropical sun.

The coasts alone of the great ocean island are peopled by colonists. There is hardly one important town 200 miles inland. The interior of the continent—an extent of country equal to two-thirds of Europe—is nearly unknown.

Fortunately, the 37th Parallel does not cross these immense solitudes, which have already cost so many victims to science. All that Glenarvan had to deal with was the south of Australia; a narrow strip of Adelaide, the whole width of Victoria, and the summit of the reversed triangle which forms New South Wales.

No order of march was needed: each traveller could do as he liked, in reason, could sweep the plain and hunt, or stay and talk to the travellers in the waggon. Paganel did both.

Crossing Adelaide was not interesting; it consisted of the bush, which in places furnishes a scanty saline herbage, of which the oxen seem particularly fond. Here and there were some 'pigs' faces,' sheep with pigs' heads, a species peculiar to New Holland, which feed amongst the telegraph posts recently erected on the coast of Adelaide.

About three in the afternoon, the waggon crossed a large treeless space, 'Mosquito Plains,' and the savant had the geographer's satisfaction of knowing that it deserved its name. The travellers and their horses suffered intensely from the bites of these unfortunate insects; it was impossible to avoid them, and ammonia was in great request. Paganel's long body was bitten from head to foot, and he needed all his philosophy to bear the pain.

Towards evening some acacia hedges enlivened the plain; here and there stood white gum trees; farther on was a freshly-beaten track, then trees of European origin, olives, lemon trees, and

green oaks, and at last good palisading. At eight the oxen, spurred on by Ayrton's goad, reached Red Gum station.

The word 'station' is used for the inland farms where cattle are reared, and the cattle farmers are called squatters. Red Gum station is unimportant, but Glenarvan found the frankest hospitality there. The table is invariably laid for strangers under these solitary roofs, and an Australian colonist is always an obliging host.

Next day Ayrton harnessed his team at daybreak, wanting to reach the frontier of Victoria that evening. The ground became more and more undulating, and a series of little hills, powdered with scarlet sand, appeared. The plain was like an immense red flag, under which the wind had forced itself to lift it in pleats. A few *malleys*, a sort of spotted white pine, with a straight smooth trunk, spread their branches and their dark green foliage over rich meadows filled with cattle. Later came vast tracts of bush and young gum-trees, and lastly, some isolated shrubs appeared, the first of the native Australian trees.

As they approached the frontier of Victoria, the aspect of the country changed perceptibly, making the travellers feel that they were at last in a new country.

After a journey of sixty miles, completed in two days, the caravan reached Aspley, the first town in Victoria, on the 14th degree of longitude, in Wimerra district.

The waggon put up at the *Crown Inn*, and supper, which consisted of sheep, cooked in every way, was soon smoking on the table.

They ate much, but talked more; they all wanted to know more about the Australian continent, and asked the geographer many questions about it. Paganel told them all about Victoria, named Australia Felix.

'False qualification!' said he. 'They would have done better to call it Rich Australia, for countries are like people, riches do not make their happiness. Thanks to its mines, Australia has been given up to needy adventurers, as you will see when we cross the gold district.'

'Isn't Victoria of recent origin?' asked Lady Glenarvan.

'Yes, it's only been founded thirty years, on the sixth of June, eighteen thirtyfive, a Tuesday.'

'At seven fifteen p.m.', answered the major, who liked to tease Paganel about the precision of his dates.

'No, at seven ten p.m.', the geographer replied, quite seriously.

'Batman and Falckner founded a settlement at Port Philip, on the bay where now stands the large town of Melbourne. For fifteen years the colony formed part of New South Wales. But, in eighteen fiftyone, it was declared independent, and took the name of Victoria.'

'Has it prospered since?' asked Glenarvan.

'Judging by the figures given in the last statistics: and whatever MacNabbs may say, I know nothing more eloquent than figures.'

'Go on,' said the major.

'I'm going on,' replied Paganel; and he did go on with some impressive statistics, including the exact number of pigs and sheep.

'Including the one we're now eating, Paganel?'

'No, without it, for it's three parts eaten.'

'Bravo, M. Paganel!' Lady Glenarvan laughed heartily. 'MacNabbs won't catch you out.'

'It's my trade to know those things. You may believe me when I tell you that this strange country is full of marvels.'

'Up till now, however—' said the major.

'But wait a little, impatient major,' Paganel warned him.

'You've scarcely set foot on the frontier, and you're complaining already. Well, I say, and repeat, and main'tain, that this is the most curious country in the world. Its formation, nature, products, climate, and even its future disappearance, have astonished, do astonish, and will astonish, all the savants of the world.'

In this country the edges rise above the waves around the centre, like a gigantic ring, and perhaps there is still a half-evaporated inland sea in the interior; its rivers dry up from day to day; there is no moisture, either in air or ground; its trees annually lose their bark instead of their leaves; these leaves turn sideways, and not fully to the sun, and give no shadow; the wood is often incombustible; stones melt away in the rain; forests are low, and grass gigantic; quadrupeds have beaks; the kangaroo has legs of unequal length; sheep have pigs' heads; foxes fly from tree to tree; swans are black; rats make nests; the bower-bird opens its drawing-rooms for the reception of its winged friends: birds astonish the imagination by the diversity of their songs and aptitudes. One acts as a clock, another makes a sound like a whip, another imitates the knife-grinder, another beats seconds like a pendulum, one laughs when it gets up in the morning, and another weeps as it goes to bed at night.

'Oh, strange and illogical country! Well has it been said you

are a sort of parody of universal laws, a defiance thrown in the face of the rest of the world!'

Certainly, after this list of Australian oddities, nobody would think of asking Paganel for more. But the major's instincts were too strong, and he said—'Is that all, Paganel?'

'Well, no, it is not all!' the savant replied with vehemence.

'Is there anything else surprising in Australia?' asked Lady Glenarvan, much astonished already.

'Yes, there is its climate, stranger still than its productions. I'm not talking about its healthiness, due to its being so rich in oxygen and so poor in nitrogen; it has no damp winds, for the trade winds blow parallel with its coasts, and most maladies are unknown in it, from typhus to measles and chronic affections.'

'But that's not a small advantage,' Glenarvan commented.

'Certainly, but I don't mean that,' answered Paganel. 'Here the climate has a most astonishing influence.'

'What?' asked Mangles.

'You'll never believe me.'

'Yes, we shall.'

'It has a moralising influence. Here metals do not oxydise in the air, nor man either. Here the atmosphere dries and whitens everything rapidly—linen and souls! They had taken the virtues of the climate into account when they decided to send people here to be made moral.'

'What, this influence can really be felt?' asked Lady Glenarvan.

'Yes, on men and animals.'

'Aren't you joking, Mr. Paganel?'

'Certainly not. Horses and cattle are remarkably docile here. You'll see.'

'It isn't possible!'

'But it is so. And malefactors, transported into this reviving and salubrious area, are regenerated in a few years. This effect is known to philanthropists. In Australia all characters improve.'

'But then, Mr. Paganel, you, who are already so good,' asked Helena, 'what will you become in this privileged land.'

'Simply excellent,' Paganel declared '*tout simplement excellent.*'

CHAPTER IX

WIMERRA RIVER

THEY STARTED at dawn the next day—24th December. The heat was very great but endurable, the route almost level, and easy for the horses. In the evening, after a good day's march, they encamped on the shores of Lake Blanche, with its brackish waters.

There Paganel was forced to agree that this lake was not white, any more than the Black Sea is black, or the Red Sea red, the Yellow River yellow, or the Blue Mountains blue. Olbinett prepared the evening meal with his habitual punctuality, and the travellers went to sleep in the wagon and under the tent, notwithstanding the lamentable howlings of the dingos, the Australian jackals.

An admirable plain, covered with chrysanthemums, extended beyond Lake Blanche. Meadows and flowers, in all their spring beauty, stretched to the horizon. The blue of the small leaved flax mixed with the scarlet of an acanthus peculiar to the country. Numerous varieties of plants enlivened this verdure, with the salt-impregnated ground disappearing under them; some of them give excellent soda by the burning and washing of their cinders. Paganel who always became a botanist amongst flowers, called all these varied productions by their names, and explained that there were 4,200 species of plants, divided into 120 families, in the Australian flora.

Later, after ten miles of road, the wagon wound amongst high thickets of acacias, mimosas, and white gum-trees. The vegetable kingdom, in this country of the 'Spring Plains,' returned in perfumes and colours what the sun gave to it in rays.

As to the animal kingdom, it was more sparse. A few cassowaries bounded across the plain without its being possible to approach them. But the major skilfully planted a bullet in the side of a very rare animal that is tending to die out: it was a *jabiru*, the giant crane of the English colonists. It was five feet high, and its black beak, wide and conical, with a pointed end, measured eighteen inches long. The violet and purple shades on its head, the lustrous green of its neck, the sparkling white of its throat, and bright

red of its long legs, looked as if Nature had exhausted her palette of primitive colours in designing it.

This bird was much admired, and the major would have carried off the honours of the day if Robert had not killed a strange creature, half hedgehog, half ant-bear, a semi-formed animal like those of the first ages of creation. A tongue, long and sticky, hung out of its toothless jaws and fished up the ants which formed its principal food.

'It's an ant-eater' Paganci recognised it at once. 'Have you ever seen such an animal?'

'It's horrible,' answered Glenarvan.

'Horrible, but curious,' replied Paganci, 'and what's more, peculiar to Australia.'

He wanted to take away the hideous creature and put it in the luggage compartment, but Olbinett objected with such indignation that the savant gave up the pleasure of keeping his specimen.

So far the travellers had met with few colonists or squatters; the country seemed uninhabited. Of natives there was not a shadow, for the savage tribes wander more northwards across the immense solitudes watered by the Darling and the Murray. But a strange sight awaited the travellers; one of those immense cattle droves which enterprising speculators brought from the eastern mountains to Victoria and South Australia.

Towards four a column of dust appeared on the horizon, and nobody could make it out till Avrton told them it was produced by cattle. As it approached, a concert of bleating, neighing, and bellowing, mixed with the human voice, whistling, shouting, or vociferating, could be heard.

A man emerged from the moving cloud. He was the chief driver of this four legged army. Glenarvan went up to him and began a conversation.

The man explained that he was a 'stock keeper,' and the owner of part of the drove, which consisted of 12,075 head of cattle, 1,000 oxen, 11,000 sheep, and 75 horses. All these animals were bought lean in the Blue Mountains, and were going to be fattened in the pasturages of South Australia, where they are sold at a large profit.

Sam Mitchell, as the stock-keeper was called, gained £2 on an oxen, and 10s. on a sheep, and would realise £6,000. It was much; but what patience and energy are required to lead such an immense drove! The reward is well earned.

He told his story briefly, while the cattle went on among the thickets of mimosas. Lady Glenarvan, Mary Grant, and the horsemen had dismounted; and, seated in the shade of a vast gum-tree, they listened to the stock-keeper's story.

Sam Mitchell had started seven months before, making about ten miles a day, and his journey would last another ten days. He had to help him in his laborious task twenty dogs and thirty men, five of whom were blacks, skilful in tracking down wandering animals. Six waggons followed the army. The drovers, armed with stock-whips, with handles eighteen inches and thongs nine feet long, moved amongst the ranks establishing order, whilst the dogs' light cavalry watched the flanks.

The travellers admired the discipline kept in the drove. The different animals went separately, for wild oxen and sheep do not agree very well together; the former will never graze where the latter have passed. So the oxen were placed first, divided into two battalions. Five regiments of sheep followed, driven by twenty drovers, and the horses brought up the rear.

Sam Mitchell made his auditors realise that the guides of his army were neither dogs nor men, but oxen, intelligent leaders whose superiority was recognised by their followers. They advanced in the front rank with perfect gravity, choosing a good road by instinct, and convinced of their right to be treated with respect. If they chose to stop, they had to be allowed to do so, and it was useless to attempt to set out again after a halt till they themselves gave the signal for departure.

Some details added by the stock keeper completed the history of this expedition, worthy of being written, if not commanded, by Xenophon himself. While the army was marching across the plain, all was well, and there was little difficulty or fatigue. The animals grazed along the routc, drinking at the numerous creeks, sleeping at night, travelling by day, and reassembling with docility at the voice of the dogs. But in the large forests of the continent, across thickets of eucalyptus and mimosas, difficulties increased. The animals got mixed up together, or strayed away, and it took much time to get them in order of march again. If it happened that a leader was missing, it had to be found again, or there would be a general helter-skelter, and the blacks often passed several days looking for it. If the great rains were falling, the lazy animals refused to go on, and in violent storms a panic took possession of them, and made them mad with terror.

But by dint of energy and activity, the stock-keeper triumphed

over these difficulties. His patience was put to the most severe test when they had to cross a river, and the animals refused. After swallowing a little water, the oxen retraced their steps and the sheep fled in every direction, rather than face the liquid. The men waited for night to get the drove to the river, and even that did not succeed. They threw in the rams, and the ewes refused to follow them. They deprived them of water for several days, but the animals managed without drinking. They carried the lambs on to the other bank, hoping that the mothers would come at their cries, and the lambs bleated, but the mothers stopped where they were. This sometimes lasted for a month, and the stock-keeper no longer knew what to do with his bleating, neighing, and bellowing army, when, one fine day, by caprice, no one knows why or how, a detachment crossed the river, and then there arose another difficulty to prevent them throwing themselves in headlong. Confusion prevails and many animals are drowned by the current.

During Sam Mitchell's narrative a great part of the drove had gone by in good order, and it was time for him to rejoin the head of the army, to choose the best pastures. So he took his leave of Glenarvan, sprang upon an excellent native horse which one of his men was holding, and a few minutes later he had disappeared in the cloud of dust.

The waggon went on in the opposite direction, and did not stop again till it reached Mount Talbot that evening. Paganel reminded his friends that it was Christmas Day, but the steward had not forgotten it, and a savoury supper, served under the tent, gained him the sincere compliments of all. Olbinett had surpassed himself and his stores had furnished a supply of European food rarely met with in the deserts of Australia. A reindeer ham, slices of salted beef, smoked salmon, and oatmeal cake, plenty of tea, abundance of whiskey, and some bottles of port, composed this astonishing meal, and Paganel added the fruit of a wild orange which grew at the foot of the hills. This is the *moccaly* of the natives; its oranges form a rather insipid fruit, but its crushed pippins are as hot as Cayenne pepper. The geographer was determined to eat them out of love to science, and set his palate on fire, so that he could no longer answer the questions with which the major overwhelmed him regarding the peculiarities of the Australian deserts.

Next day, 26th December, offered no incident of importance. They passed the springs of Norton Creek, and later on Mackenzie

River, half dried up. The weather kept fine, but the heat was endurable; the wind blew from the south and cooled the atmosphere, as a north wind would do in the boreal hemisphere, and this, Paganel told Robert, is fortunate, for the heat is, on an average, greater in the southern than in the northern hemisphere.

'How is that?' asked the boy.

'Have you never heard that the earth is nearer to the sun in the winter than it is in the summer?'

'Yes, Mr. Paganel.'

'And that the cold of winter is due to the slant of the sun's rays?'

'Yes, I know that, too.'

'Well, my boy, it is for that very reason that it's warmer in the southern hemisphere.'

'I don't understand how,' Robert answered.

'Reflect then,' continued Paganel. 'When "it" is winter in Europe, what season is it here in Australia, our antipodes?'

'It's summer,' answered Robert.

'Well, then, when it is summer in Australia, the earth is nearer the sun. Now do you understand?'

'Yes, Mr. Paganel. I never thought of that before.'

'Then don't forget it again, my boy.'

Robert ended his lesson in cosmography by learning that the average temperature of Victoria is 74°.

In the evening the caravan encamped five miles beyond Lake Lonsdale, between Mount Drummond on the north and the low summit of Mount Dryden on the south. Next morning, at eleven, the wagon reached the banks of the Wimmera, on the 143rd meridian.

The river, half a mile wide, flows through rows of gum-trees and acacias. A few magnificent myrtles rose to a height of fifteen feet, with their long drooping branches and red flowers. Birds of brilliant colours fluttered in the green twigs and below, on the surface of the water, floated a couple of wild black swans. This *rara avis* of Australian rivers was soon lost in the meanderings of the Wimmera.

In the meantime, the wagon had stopped on a carpet of soft grass, extending to the rapid waters. As there was neither bridge nor raft to carry them over, Ayrton looked for a practicable ford. The river seemed less deep a quarter of a mile up-stream, and that was the place he chose. Soundings gave only three feet of water, and the wagon could go through that without risk.

'Isn't there any other means of crossing the river?' Glenarvan asked the quartermaster.

'None, my lord,' answered Ayrton; 'but this doesn't seem dangerous, we can ford the river here.'

'Ought Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant to leave the waggon?'

'There's no need. My oxen are surefooted and I'll take care to keep them straight.'

'Very well, Ayrton,' answered Glenarvan, 'I trust to you.'

The horsemen surrounded the heavy vehicle, and they entered the river. When waggons attempt to ford they are generally surrounded by a number of empty casks, to keep them on the surface of the water, but here this swimming-belt was lacking, and they had to depend on the sagacity of the oxen, held in hand by the prudent Ayrton, who guided the team from his seat. The major and the two sailors went on a few yards ahead, while Glenarvan and Mangles, on either side of the waggon, held themselves ready to go to the ladies' help and, Paganel and Robert brought up the rear.

All went well till they reached the middle of the stream where the water came above the wheels. Then the oxen lost their footing and dragged the swaying contraption with them. Ayrton behaved very courageously; he sprang into the water, and, holding on to the horns of the oxen, he succeeded in putting them in the right track. Then an unforeseen rise in the ground, and the waggon bent under the shock; the water touched the ladies' feet, and the waggon and team began to drift, in spite of all Glenarvan and John Mangles' efforts. It was a moment full of anxiety.

Happily, a vigorous pull drew the vehicle nearer the opposite bank, which sloped down to the water, so that the oxen and horses climbed it easily, and soon men and animals found themselves safe, wet through, but satisfied. The fore-part of the waggon had been broken by the shock, and Glenarvan's horse had lost some of its shoes. This accident demanded prompt repairs, and Ayrton offered to go to Black Point Station, situated twenty miles to the north, to bring back a farrier.

'Go, Ayrton,' Glenarvan agreed. 'How much time shall you want to go and come back?'

'Fifteen hours, perhaps,' answered Ayrton, 'but not more.'

'Go, then, and we'll camp here till you come back.'

CHAPTER X

THE MELBOURNE-SANDHURST RAILWAY

THE MAJOR had not seen Ayrton leave the Wimerra encampment to seek a farrier at Black Point Station without some apprehension. But he did not say a word about his secret doubts; he simply contented himself with studying the neighbourhood of the river. The tranquillity of these peaceful plains was undisturbed by anything, and, after a few hours of darkness, the sun reappeared above the horizon.

Glenarvan's only fear was that Ayrton should come back alone: if he did not find a workman the waggon could not set out again. The journey would be delayed for several days, and Glenarvan was impatient to reach his goal.

Happily, Ayrton lost no time, and he reappeared at daybreak next day. The man who accompanied him said he was a farrier from Black Point Station: he was a tall, muscular man, with a very low type of physiognomy, not at all prepossessing. This did not much matter, so long as he knew his trade; anyhow, he spoke very little, and uttered no useless words.

'Does he know his business?' John Mangles asked the quartermaster.

'I don't know any more about him than you, captain,' answered Ayrton. 'We shall see.'

The farrier set to work. He knew what he was about, that was shown by the way he mended the waggon, and he worked skilfully, with no common strength. The major noticed that his wrists were marked with a ring of blackish flesh, and seemed to have been recently hurt: he asked the farrier about them, but the man did not answer, and went on with his work. Two hours later the damaged waggon was repaired, and the farrier soon shod Glenarvan's horse, for which he had brought the shoes in readiness. The major noticed that there was a trefoil roughly cut out of the back of these horseshoes, and pointed it out to Ayrton.

'It's the mark of Black Point,' explained the quartermaster. 'It enables them to follow the track of any horses that stray from the station.'

When the farrier had finished his work, he went away without

having spoken four words, and half-an-hour later the travellers were again on their way. Beyond the mimosas extended an open plain: fragments of quartz and ferruginous rocks lay amongst the bushes, the tall herbs and the palisades which surrounded the enclosures for the animals. A few miles farther on the wheels of the waggon sank into marshy ground, where murmured irregular creeks half hidden under a network of gigantic reeds; then the travellers passed vast salt-lagoons in full evaporation. The journey went on pleasantly, and without fatigue.

Lady Glenarvan invited the horsemen to pay her a visit one by one, for her drawing-room was very small. There they could rest from the fatigue of riding, and they enjoyed the conversation of that amiable woman, as, seconded by Miss Mary, she did the honours of her wheeled house with perfect grace. John Mangles was not forgotten in these daily invitations, and his serious conversation did not displease; on the contrary.

It was thus that they crossed obliquely the mail road from Crowland to Horsham, a dusty highway little used by foot-passengers. A few low hills were passed, and in the evening they reached a place three miles above Maryborough. A fine rain was falling, which in any other country would have made the ground wet, but here the air absorbed the dampness so wonderfully that they could encamp as usual. The next day, 29th December, their journey was somewhat delayed by a series of low hills, a miniature Switzerland. The ladies walked part of the way to avoid the continual jolting, and they found the change enjoyable. At eleven they reached Carisbrook, rather an important municipality Aviton advised them not to go through the town: to save time, he said, and Glenarvan was of the same opinion. But Paganel, with laudable curiosity, wanted to visit it. They let him do as he liked, and the waggon slowly continued on its way.

Paganel, as usual, took Robert with him. He stayed only a short time, but it was enough to give him a pretty good idea of Australian towns. There was a bank, a town-hall, a market, a school, a church, and a hundred uniform brick houses, all built in a regular quadrilateral, crossed by parallel streets in the English fashion. Great activity reigned everywhere, remarkable in so young a town: in Australia the towns seem to grow like trees in the heat of the sun. Business men hurry down the streets, gold coming from Bendigo or Mount Alexander is escorted by the native police. Everyone, spurred on by self-interest, thinks only

of his own business, and the strangers passed unperceived in the midst of the laborious population.

After an hour's sightseeing, the two visitors rejoined their companions across carefully cultivated country. Long meadows, 'Low Level Plains,' succeeded it, with innumerable flocks of sheep and shepherds' huts. Then without any transition, the desert appeared with the abruptness peculiar to Australian scenery.

So far they had met with none of the native tribes living in a savage state. Paganel told Glenarvan that, under that latitude, these people mostly frequented the plains of the Murray, situated 100 miles to the east.

'We're approaching the gold country,' said he. 'In two days' time we shall be crossing the opulent region of Mount Alexander. It was there that miners flocked in eighteen fiftytwo and the natives had to fly to the interior deserts. We're in a civilised country, though it doesn't look like it, and our route, before the end of the day, will cross the railway which puts the Murray in communication with the sea. A railway in Australia seems very surprising!'

'Why, Paganel?' asked Glenarvan.

'Oh, because they don't harmonise! Oh, I know very well that you Englishmen, accustomed to colonise—you who have electric telegraphs and universal exhibitions in New Zealand —you find it quite natural. But, in a Frenchman like myself, it confuses all his ideas about Australia.'

'Because you look at the past instead of at the present,' said Mangles.

'Agreed,' answered Paganel; 'but locomotives and mimosas, steam and eucalyptus, don't seem natural companions. I can't think of savages catching the three thirty express from Melbourne to Sandhurst, and no one could but an Englishman or an American. The poetry of the desert vanishes before your railways.'

'What does it matter if progress follows in its path?' answered the major.

A noisy whistle interrupted the discussion: the travellers were not a mile from the railway. An engine, coming slowly from the south, stopped precisely at the intersection between the railway and the wagon road.

This railway, as Paganel had said, connected the capital of Victoria with the Murray, the largest river in Australia. This

immense stream crosses a rich and fertile country, and thanks to the easy communications that the railway makes possible with Melbourne, the squatting stations get more frequent along its line.

The 37th parallel crosses this railway line and it was towards this point that Ayrton was driving his wagon, preceded by the horsemen, who drawn by curiosity had galloped on to the bridge. A large crowd was also hurrying towards the railway—the inhabitants of the neighbouring stations had left their houses, the shepherds their flocks.

'To the railway! To the railway!

Something serious must have happened to produce all that excitement—a great catastrophe perhaps. Glenarvan, followed by his companions, hastened on, and in a few minutes he reached Camden Bridge where he soon saw what had happened—a frightful accident had taken place—not a collision, but a train which had run off the line and fallen into the river.

The water was encumbered by fragments of engines and carriages, as five carriages out of six had been hurled into the river bed after the engine. Only the last carriage miraculously preserved by the snapping of the couplings, stood on the line a few yards from the abyss.

Glenarvan and the others mixed with the crowd, and listened, for everyone working in the ruins was trying to explain the accident.

'The bridge broke down—one ascended.'

'Why, it's still intact—another pointed out 'They're forgotten to close it for the train to pass. That's all!'

It was, in fact a swing bridge constructed to allow boats to pass. Had the guard by some unpardonable carelessness, forgotten to close it and sent the train running with express speed into the river? The accident had happened in the night to express No. 37 which had started from Melbourne at 11.45 p.m. It must have been 3.15 a.m. when the train, twenty-five minutes after leaving Castlemaine Station, reached Camden Bridge, and so met with its fate.

The passengers and the railway officials from the last carriage set about getting help, but as the telegraph posts were lying on the ground no message could be sent. It took three hours before the authorities of Castlemaine could arrive on the scene of the disaster, and it was six in the morning when a squadron of police, under the direction of an inspector and the surveyor general of

the colony, arrived and help was available. The squatters and their men were already doing all they could to extinguish the fire which had broken out amidst the ruins, but there was no hope of extricating any living being from the furnace. Fire had completed the work of destruction, and only ten of the passengers had survived, those who happened to be in the last waggon; the railway administration had sent an engine to take them back to Castlemaine.

In the meantime, Lord Glenarvan had introduced himself to the surveyor-general, and talked with him and the inspector of police. This latter was a tall, thin man, imperturbably calm, who, if he had any feeling in his heart, showed none in his face. He was contemplating the disaster as a mathematician would a problem and was trying to solve it.

'What a fearful accident!' exclaimed Glenarvan.

'Worse than that, my lord.'

'Worse than that!' Glenarvan was shocked at the phrase.
'What could be worse?'

'A crime!' was the calm reply.

'A crime!'

'Yes, my lord,' the surveyor-general continued, 'our inquiry has led us to the certainty that the catastrophe is the result of a crime. The last carriage contained the luggage-van, and it has been pillaged and the surviving passengers were attacked by a band of five or six malefactors. The bridge was left open not through carelessness but on purpose, and that, added to the disappearance of the guard, makes us conclude that he was an accomplice.'

At this deduction, the police officer shook his head.

'You don't agree?' asked the surveyor-general.

'No, I don't think the guard is an accomplice.'

'But if the guard wasn't an accomplice, the crime couldn't have been committed by savages, for the mechanism of the bridge would be quite unfamiliar to them.'

'True,' the inspector agreed.

'A boatman, who took his boat through Camden Bridge at ten forty last night, says that the bridge was properly closed when he went through it. So the guard must be implicated.'

The inspector again shook his head.

'Then you don't attribute this crime to savages?'

'No, I do not.'

'To whom, then?'

At that moment a murmur of voices was heard half a mile up the stream; it was coming from a crowd of men who were marching towards the station. As they approached, Glenarvan saw that two of them were carrying a corpse: it was the body of the guard, already cold. A dagger thrust in the heart had caused his death, and the assassins, dragging his corpse some distance from Camden Bridge, had wanted to avert the suspicions of the police. This justified the officer's doubts: savages had had nothing to do with the crime.

'Those who did the deed,' he said, 'are men familiar with the use of this little instrument,' and he exhibited a pair of 'darnies, crude handcuffs made of a double iron ring and furnished with a lock.

'Before long,' he added, 'I shall have the pleasure of offering them this bracelet as a Christmas gift.'

'Then you suspect—'

'Men who travelled gratis on her Majesty's ships.'

'What! Convicts?' cried Paganel.

'I thought that convicts weren't allowed on the soil of Victoria?' said Glenarvan.

'They aren't allowed, but they come all the same,' said the inspector. 'I believe these came direct from Perth. Well, I'll take care they go back there.'

At that moment the waggon came in sight. Wishing to spare the ladies the horrible sight at Camden Bridge, Glenarvan took leave of the surveyor-general, and signed to his friends to follow him.

'It's no reason,' he said, 'for interrupting our journey.'

At the waggon he merely told his wife about the railway accident, without mentioning either the crime, or the presence of a band of convicts in the country. Ayton alone was informed of this, and then the little troop crossed the railway some yards above the bridge, and went on eastward.

CHAPTER XI

FIRST PRIZE FOR GEOGRAPHY

A CHAIN of hills lay on the horizon, and bounded the plain two miles from the railway. The waggon at last reached a charming country, where fine trees grew in isolated groups, with quite a tropical exuberance. Amongst the most admirable was the *casuarina*, which seems to have borrowed its robust structure of trunk from the oak, its odorous pods from the acacia, and its rough leaves from the pine. There grew the *banksia latifolia*, with its strange looking elegant cones, as well as large shrubs with drooping twigs, looking like cascades of green water.

The little troop halted: Lady Glenarvan had asked Ayrton to stop his team, and the waggon wheels ceased to creak over the said. Long green carpets stretched under the groups of trees but the grass was raised into regular mounds like a vast chess board. Paganel knew that this was a native cemetery; it was so cool and shaded, made so gay by the birds, that it awoke no sad thought: it might have been part of the Garden of Eden before death was known, and it seemed made for the living. But these graves, which the savage keeps in repair so piously, were already disappearing under a rising tide of verdure. Conquest had driven the Australian far from the land where his ancestors had reposed, and colonisation would soon claim these fields of death for flocks and herds. These native cemeteries have become rare; how many, trodden under foot by careless travellers, cover quite a recent generation!

Meantime, Paganel and Robert, going ahead of their companions, wound in and out of the shady walks amongst the graves. They were talking and instructing one another, for the geographer maintained that he learned much in his conversations with Robert Grant. But they had not gone a quarter of a mile before Glenarvan saw them stop, dismount, and look down on the ground. They seemed to be examining something.

Ayrton urged on his team, and the waggon soon reached the two friends: then the cause of their halt and their astonishment was at once made clear. A native child, a boy about eight years old, clothed in European garments, was sleeping peacefully in

the shade of a magnificent banksia. His woolly hair, his almost black skin, flat nose, thick lips, and very long arms, classed him amongst the natives of the interior. But his face was intelligent, and it was clear that education had done something for this young savage.

Lady Glenarvan felt deeply interested; she got out of the waggon, and soon they had surrounded the little native, who was sound asleep.

'Poor child!' exclaimed Mary Grant; 'can he be lost in this desert?'

'I suppose,' Lady Glenarvan suggested, 'he must have come some distance to visit this cemetery. Those he loved are no doubt buried here.'

'But we mustn't leave him!' said Robert. 'He's alone, and--'

His charitable speech was interrupted by a movement of the young native, who turned over without waking; but their surprise was at once evoked at the sight on his shoulders of a label bearing the following inscription:--

TO I N E.

PASSENGER TO ECHUCA.

CARE OF JEFFRIES SMITH, RAILWAY PORTER.

PREPAID.

'Just like Englishmen!' exclaimed Paganel. 'They send a child like a parcel. They told me such a thing was done, but I wouldn't believe it.'

'Poor little fellow!' said Helena. 'Was he in the train that ran off the line at Camden Bridge? Perhaps his parents were killed, and he's left alone in the world!'

'I don't think so, Lady Glenarvan,' replied John Mangles. 'The address on his back shows he was travelling alone.'

'He's waking up,' Mary Grant told them.

The boy opened his eyes, but the light made him shut them again at once. When Lady Glenarvan took his hand he got up and looked at the travellers with astonishment. He seemed frightened at first, but Helena's presence reassured him.

'Do you understand English, my boy?' she asked.

'Yes, I understand it and speak it,' answered the child with a strong foreign accent, like that of French people speaking English.

'What's your name?' asked Helena.

'Toline' said the little native.

'Ah! Toliné!' exclaimed Paganel. 'If I'm not mistaken, Toliné means bark of the tree in Australian?'

Toliné made an affirmative gesture, and looked at the ladies.

'Where do you come from, dear?' asked Helena.

'From Melbourne, by the Sandhurst railway.'

'Were you in the train that ran off the line at Camden?' Lord Glenarvan asked him.

'Yes, sir,' answered Toliné, 'but the God of the Bible protected me.'

'Were you travelling alone?'

'Yes, sir. The Reverend Mr. Paxton had asked Jeffrics Smith to take care of me, but the poor porter was killed.'

'Then you knew nobody else in the train?'

'No, sir; but God watches over children, and never deserts them.' The gentle voice in which Toliné said this was very touching. When he spoke of God he grew serious and his eyes lighted up. This religious enthusiasm in so young a child is easily explained: he was one of the young natives baptised by the English missionaries, and brought up by them as Methodists. His calm answers, neat appearance, and sober costume, already made him look like a little Wesleyan minister. But where was he going across these desert regions, and why had he left Camden Bridge?

Lady Glenarvan asked him.

'I was going back to my tribe in Lachlan,' he replied. 'I want to see my family again.'

'Are they Australians?' asked John Mangles.

'Yes, Lachlan Australians,' Toliné answered.

'Have you a father and a mother?' Robert Grant enquired.

'Yes, brother,' answered Toliné, offering his hand to young Grant, who, touched at being called 'brother' made friends with him at once.

Meantime the travellers, who were much interested by the young savage's answers, had seated themselves round him to listen. The sun was already going down behind the large trees, and as the place seemed favourable for a halt, and as it did not much matter about going a few miles more before nightfall, Glenarvan gave orders to have everything prepared for camp. Ayrton unyoked the oxen; helped by Mulrady and Wilson, he hobbled them, and let them graze at will. The tent was set up and Olbinett prepared the meal. Toliné accepted the invitation to share in it, though not without ceremony, although he was

hungry. They sat down to table, the two children side by side. Robert chose the best pieces for his new companion, and Toliné accepted them with a timid yet charming grace.

Conversation did not flag; they asked the boy questions, and wanted to know his history. This was very simple: his past was that of those poor natives confided from their tenderest infancy to the care of the charitable societies by the tribes of the neighbouring colonies. The Australians have gentle manners, and do not show to the invaders the same ferocious hatred that characterises the New Zealanders, and perhaps some of the North Australian tribes.

They are often seen, even in their primitive costume, in such large towns as Adelaide, Sydney, and Melbourne. They carry on a trade in hunting and fishing implements; some of the chiefs, doubtless for the sake of economy, let their children profit by the offer of an English education. Toliné's parents, veritable savages of Lachlan, a vast region situated beyond the Murray, had done so. During the five years he had been at Melbourne he had never seen his parents, and yet the imperishable family sentiment was still alive in him, and it was to see his tribe, perhaps dispersed, and his family, perhaps destroyed, that he had taken the desert route.

'When you have seen your parents, shall you go back to Melbourne, my child?' asked Lady Glenarvan.

'Yes, ma'am,' answered Toliné, looking at her affectionately.

'What do you mean to do when you're grown up?'

'I mean to help my brothers out of their misery and ignorance, and teach them to know and love God! I shall be a missionary.'

The words, uttered seriously by a child of eight, might make scoffers laugh, but they were understood and respected by these grave Scottish people, who admired the religious valour of the young disciple, already ready for the fight. Paganel was greatly moved, and felt a real sympathy for the little native.

For—must it be said?—this savage in a European dress had not greatly pleased him: he had not come to Australia to see the natives in top-coats. He did not want them to wear anything but their tattoo marks, and this 'respectable' costume confused his ideas. But from the time that Toliné spoke enthusiastically, he revoked his opinion and became his sincere admirer.

The end of this conversation was to make him the little Australian's best friend. In reply to a question of Lady Glenarvan's, Toliné said that he went to the Melbourne National School.

'What do you learn there?' asked Helena.

'The Bible, mathematics, geography.'

'Ah, geography!' Paganel was touched in a sensitive place.

'Yes, sir,' answered Toliné. 'I had the first prize for geography before the Christmas holidays.'

'You had a prize for geography, my boy?'

'Here it is, sir,' Toliné took a book out of his pocket.

It was a well-bound Bible. On the first page was written:—
'Melbourne National School, 1st prize for geography, Toliné,
from Lachlan.'

Paganel was delighted: an Australian native who knew geography was marvellous; but he ought to have known that this is not rare in Australian schools, where the young savages are very apt at acquiring geographical knowledge, though they do not take to arithmetic in the same way. Lady Glenarvan explained to Toliné that Paganel was a celebrated and distinguished professor.

'A teacher of geography!' answered Toliné. 'Oh, sir, please examine me!'

'Examine you, my boy?' said Paganel. 'That I will. I meant to do it before you asked. I shan't be sorry to see how geography is taught in the Melbourne National School!'

Then fixing his spectacles on his nose, and drawing himself up, he began his questions in his most professorial tone.

'Toliné,' he began, 'stand up!'

Toliné who was already standing, modestly awaited the geographer's questions.

'Toliné,' continued Paganel, 'what are the five great divisions of the globe?'

'Oceania, Asia, Africa, America, and Europe,' answered Toliné.

'Perfect. We will first speak of Oceania, as we are in it now. What are its principal divisions?'

'Malaysia, or the Indian Archipelago, Australia, and Polynesia. Its principal islands are Australia, which belongs to the English; New Zealand, which belongs to the English; Tasmania, which belongs to the English; and many smaller islands, which belong to the English.'

'Good,' answered Paganel; 'but New Caledonia, the Sandwich Islands, the Mindanao, and the Pomotou?'

'They are islands placed under the protection of Great Britain.'

'How! Under the protection of Great Britain!' cried Paganel.
'I thought it was France--'

'France!' exclaimed the boy, looking astonished.

'*Tiens! tiens!*' said Paganel; 'so that's what they teach you at the Melbourne National School?'

'Yes, sir. Isn't it right?'

'Oh, yes, perfect,' Paganel answered. 'All Oceania belongs to the English, that's understood! We'll go on.'

Much to the major's amusement, Paganel seemed half vexed, half surprised.

'We'll pass on to Asia now,' he decided.

'Asia,' answered Toliné, 'is an immense country. Capital—Calcutta. Principal towns—Bombay, Madras, Aden, Singapore. Islands—the Laccadives, the Maldives, and many others, all belonging to the English.'

'Good; Good! Toliné. And Africa?'

'Africa contains two principal colonies. On the south, Cape Colony, with Cape Town for capital; and on the west, the English settlements: principal town, Sierra Leone.'

'Well answered!' said Paganel. 'It's no use to speak of Algeria or Egypt; they won't be in the Britannic atlas! We'll pass on to America.'

'America,' Toliné answered, 'is divided into North and South America. The former belongs to the English through Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia; and the United States, under the administration of the Governor Johnson!'

'Governor Johnson!' exclaimed Paganel, 'the successor of the great and good Lincoln, assassinated by a madman, fanatical for slavery! Perfect! As to South America and the East Indies, with their Guiana, Jamaica, Trinidad, and the rest, they belong to the English, too. I shall not dispute the fact. But, Toliné, I should like to know what you, or rather your professors, have to say about Europe?'

'Europe?' answered Toliné, who could not understand the geographer's excitement.

'Yes, Europe. To whom does Europe belong?'

'Why, Europe belongs to the English, of course!' the child asserted.

'I thought as much,' Paganel answered. 'But how? That's what I want to know.'

'Through England, Scotland, Ireland, Malta, the Channel Islands, the Hebrides, the Shetland Islands—'

'Good, Toliné; but there are other countries you have forgotten to mention.'

'What countries, sir?' the child was not at all disconcerted.

'Spain, Russia, Austria, Prussia, France.'

'They are provinces, not countries,' Toliné replied.

'*Par exemple!*' the Frenchman, snatched off his spectacles.

'Spain, capital Gibraltar.' Toliné began.

'Admirable! Perfect! Sublime! And France, for I am a Frenchman, and should be glad to know to whom I belong?'

'France,' answered Toliné, quietly, 'is an English province, and Calais is the capital.'

'Calais!' cried Paganel; 'do you believe that Calais still belongs to England?'

'Of course.'

'And that it's the capital of France?'

'Yes, sir, that is where the governor, Lord Napoléon, resides.'

At these last words Paganel roared with laughter. Toliné did not know what to think of this—they had questioned him, and he had answered to the best of his ability. But the strange nature of his answers could not be blamed upon him; he did not realise how strange they were. But he did not seem disconcerted, and waited gravely till Paganel had done laughing.

'I thought Toliné would teach you something you didn't know before,' laughed the major.

'He has indeed, major. So that is how they teach geography at Melbourne! Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Oceania, all the world belongs to the English. With such an education as that, I can well understand the submission of the natives! Well, Toliné—and the moon, does that belong to the English, too?'

'It will belong to them some day,' the young savage answered gravely.

Thereupon Paganel got up. He could not keep still, and he went a quarter of a mile from the encampment to have out his laugh.

In the meantime Glenarvan had been to fetch a book from his little travelling library, it was Richardson's *Geography*.

'Here, my boy,' he told Toliné, 'take this book; you have some false ideas about geography which it will correct. I give it to you as a remembrance of our meeting.'

Toliné took the book without answering; he looked at it attentively, shaking his head with an air of incredulity and without making up his mind to put it in his pocket.

Night was come: it was ten o'clock. Robert offered his friend Toliné the half of his bed, and the little native accepted. A few moments later Lady Glenarvan and Mary Grant went back to their compartment in the waggon, and the travellers lay down under the tent, whilst Paganel's laughter rang out in chorus with the low, soft song of the wild magpie.

The next morning, when at six a ray of sunlight awoke the sleepers, they looked in vain for the Australian child. Toliné had disappeared. Was his disappearance due to his wish to get to the Lachlan districts as quickly as possible, or had Paganel's laughter offended him? Nobody knew.

But when Lady Glenarvan awoke she found on her breast a fresh bunch of leaves from the sensitive plant; and Paganel, in his coat pocket, found Richardson's *Geography*!